KIA ASAMIYA
BATMAN
CHILD of DREAMS
with Max Allan Collins

It begins as an uncomfortably ordinary Gotham City night—with Two-Face holding an office full of civilians hostage. A television crew from Tokyo sneaks onto the scene to find themselves a part of the breaking story. The threat of homicide hangs heavy in the air—until Batman arrives to thwart the villain's plan.

And then it gets weird.

Suddenly, inexplicably, Two-Face burns up . . . literally. Hours later, a mummified husk is all that remains of one of Batman's greatest foes.

But the thing of it is—this foe wasn't Two-Face. The real Two-Face rests comfortably in Arkham Asylum.

And if the kidnapper wasn't Two-Face—then who was he? It's a question Batman shares with Yuko Yagi, anchor of the Japanese news team initially assigned to snare an interview with Batman, and who is rather shamelessly using her search for an answer to get as close as possible to the Dark Knight.

Their investigation points them in the direction of an addictive, transformative drug just hitting the streets of Gotham; a drug that physically alters the user and allows him to become a living incarnation of a preselected member of Batman's Rogues Gallery . . . just before it burns him alive!

The hunt for the drug and its manufacturer takes Yuko and Batman through Gotham City—and then to their final destination . . . Tokyo. Along the way, Batman confronts classic villain after classic villain—never quite certain if they are chemically induced fakes, or the real, even deadlier originals!

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BATMAN

BATMAN

CHILD *of* DREAMS

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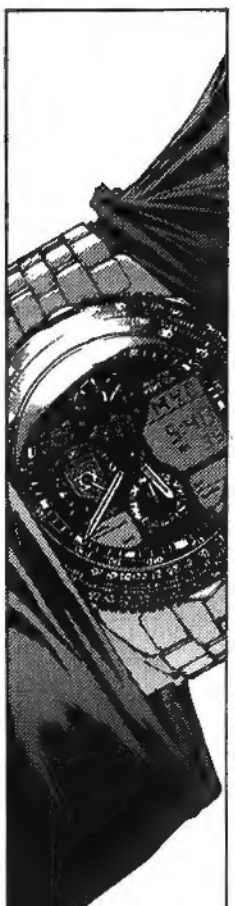
COVER PAINTED BY KIA ASAMIYA.

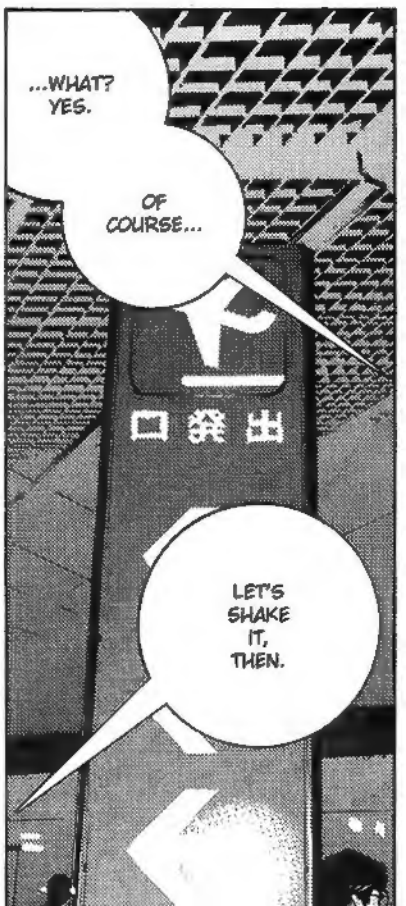
OOOM
SHHHOOO
THE SCREAMS OF JETS MIGHT AWAKEN ANY SLEEPER, ROUSE ANY DREAMER...BUT THE BATMAN'S WORST NIGHTMARE BEGINS HERE...

...AT NARITA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT--JAPAN.

NONSTOP GOTHAM CITY BOARDING NOW-- GATE 7A.



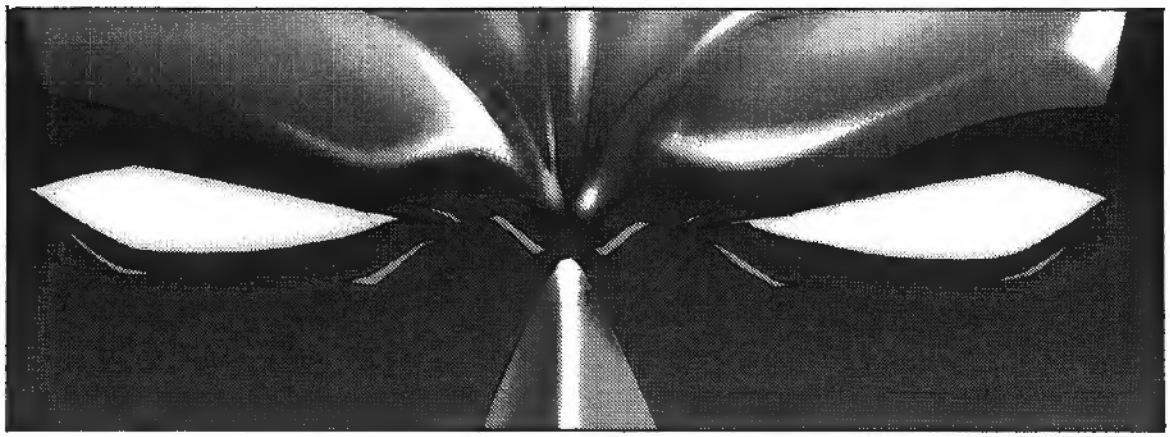
DAMN-- THEY'RE ON TIME FOR ONCE!
YOU GOT EVERYTHING, YUKO?


...WHAT? YES.
OF COURSE...
口 発 出
LET'S SHAKE IT, THEN.

THE BATMAN... INTERVIEWING THE DARK KNIGHT...
...NOW THAT WILL CERTAINLY STOP ALL THE TALK...
HEY!
WHAT THE HELL'S THE IDEA!?
HUH?
WHO TOLD YOU TO TAKE THIS?! I THOUGHT SOMEBODY STOLE IT OR SOMETHIN'... WHAT AN AIRHEAD!
NAGAI? I'M SORRY, BUT--
--WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THIS CASE IS MY RESPONSIBILITY-- IMPORTANT MATERIALS THE SPONSOR ENTRUSTED TO ME, AND ME ALONE! GOT IT?
SURE... I MEAN, I WAS JUST PITCHING IN-- I JUST THOUGHT...
YOU'RE NOT PAID TO THINK...JUST LOOK PRETTY IN FRONT OF A MICROPHONE, AND LEAVE THE REST TO THE MEN.
SO I GUESS BEING A PRODUCER MEANS NAGAI HAS TO ACT LIKE A TOTAL JERK.
YEAH... HE'S BEEN A CHARMER ALL WEEK.
FACE IT, GUYS-- WE'RE ALL A LITTLE EDGY... IT'S OUR FIRST GIG AWAY FROM JAPAN, AFTER ALL.
BUT IF THAT JERK NAGAI GETS IN THE WAY OF MY INTERVIEW, HE'LL FIND I'M MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE...
MINOR TENSIONS FLARE AMONG A JAPANESE TV CREW, AS THEY FACE THE ENVIABLE...BUT FORMIDABLE... ASSIGNMENT OF LANDING AN INTERVIEW WITH A LEGEND.
YET THESE TINY, EGO-DRIVEN BRUSHFIRES PORTEND A CONFLAGRATION TO COME, FOR THE MAN KNOWN AS...

BATMAN--TWO WORDS MAKING ONE...A NAME HE HAD TAKEN MANY YEARS AGO,
WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER, WHEN THE HALLOWEEN MELODRAMA HAD APPEALED TO HIM...

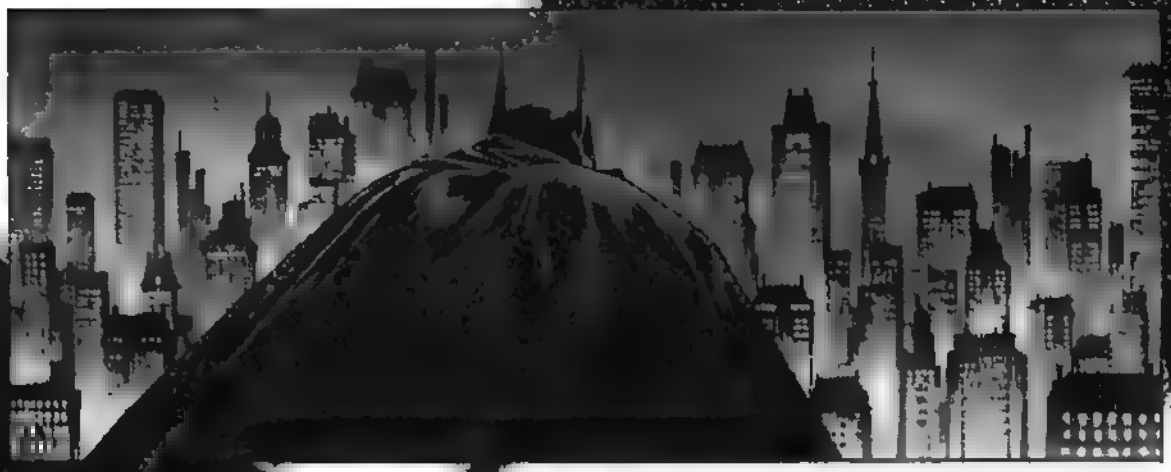


...AND YET FOR ALL ITS CHILDHOOD TRAPPINGS, THE TERROR HAD TAKEN ROOT,
AND A YOUNG MAN'S FANTASY OF STRIKING FEAR BECAME A GROWN MAN'S MISSION...

HE HAD LEARNED TO BE WORSE THAN THE BAD MEN HE SOUGHT,
MORE TERRIBLE THAN THE VILLAINS WHO ROSE TO MEET HIS CHALLENGE.

BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG HIS TORTURED, IF RIGHTEOUS PATH, THE BAT BECAME DOMINANT, OF THE TWO WORDS MAKING ONE... THE MAN BENEATH THE CAPE AND COWL OVERSHADOWED BY THE DARK ROLE HE PLAYED ON THE DARKER STREETS OF GOTHAM

HE WAS BORN BRUCE WAYNE, AND YET NOW HE SPENT HIS DAYS PRETENDING TO BE HIMSELF... EVER SINCE BECOMING A NIGHTMARE FIGMENT OF HIS OWN IMAGINATION... EVEN AS CHILDREN OF ALL AGES ACTED OUT THEIR OWN BATMAN FANTASIES.



HARMLESS FUN...JUST AS YOUNG BRUCE WAYNE HAD PLAYED COWBOYS AND INDIANS, COPS AND ROBBERS, ZORRO AND THE EVIL CAPTAIN...KIDS TODAY PLAYED BATMAN AND VILLAIN.

BUT OCCASIONALLY AN OLDER "CHILD" WOULD FEED ON THE URBAN LEGEND OF GOTHAM'S DARK KNIGHT...

GEYSER CENTER ON 34TH STREET-- SUSPECT HAS TAKEN OVER 22ND FLOOR...

WE CONFIRM FIFTEEN HOSTAGES... CAN CONFIRM NO ACCOMPLICE AT THIS TIME, REPEAT, NO APPARENT ACCOMPLICE.

WHUP WHUP WHUP

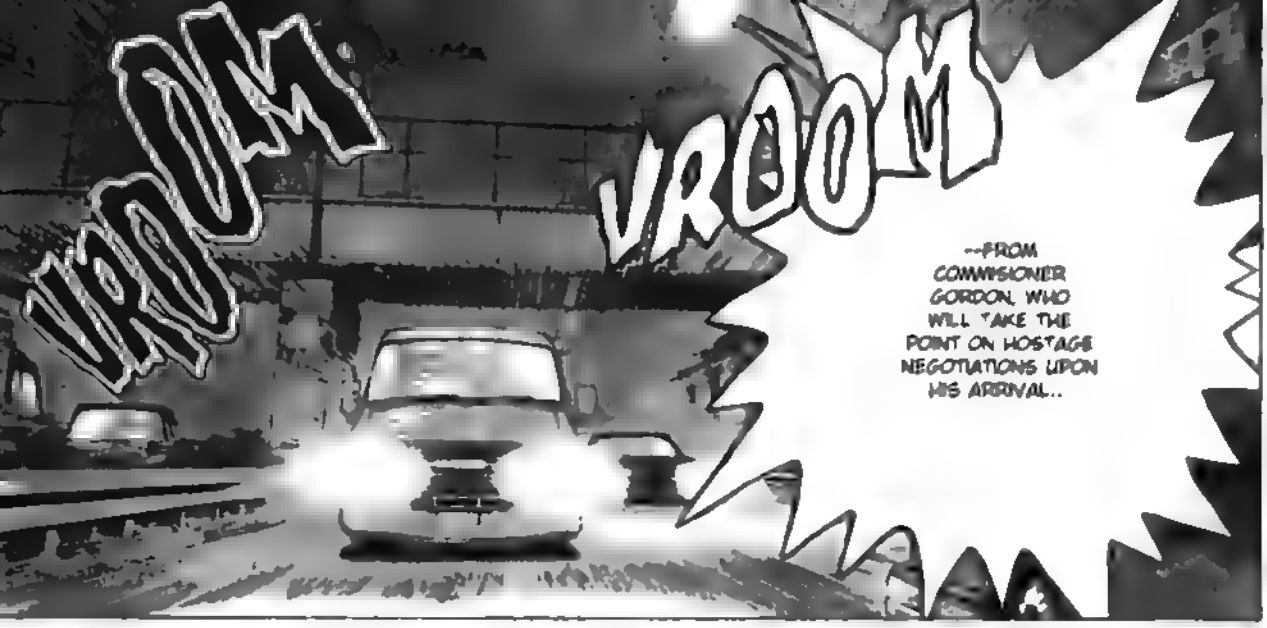
COMMISSIONER GORDON ARRIVING MOMENTARILY BY 'COPTER...

WHUP WHUP WHUP

SWAT UNITS, TAKE YOUR POSITIONS--

--*UNIT ALPHA*, ENTER THROUGH PARKING GARAGE...

UNIT BETA, POSITION YOURSELVES IN ADJACENT BUILDING AND AWAIT FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS--

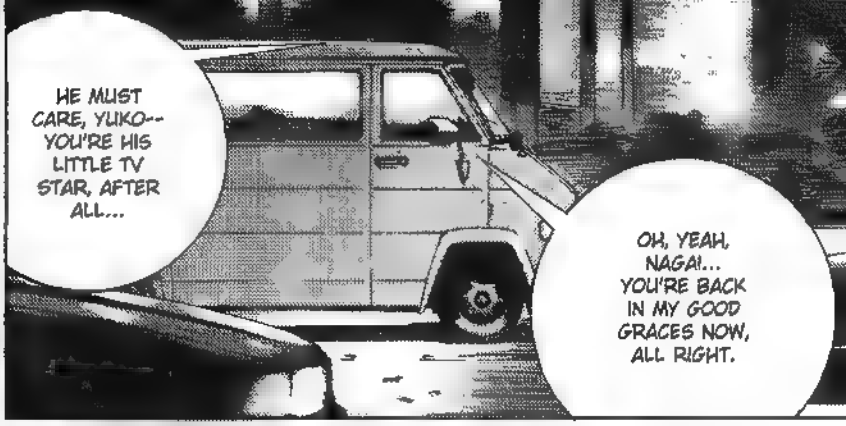

VROOM
VROOM
--FROM COMMISSIONER GORDON, WHO WILL TAKE THE POINT ON HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS UPON HIS ARRIVAL..

FUNNY WAY TO TRACK A BAT-- WITH A POLICE BAND RADIO!
BARELY THROUGH CUSTOMS, AND WE'RE OFF AND RUNNING GOOD OMEN.
ONLY IF BATMAN SHOWS UP, NAGAI OTHERWISE IT'S JUST A CRIME STORY...
NOT JUST A CRIME STORY.. GOTHAM IS THE CRIME CAPITAL OF THE WORLD!

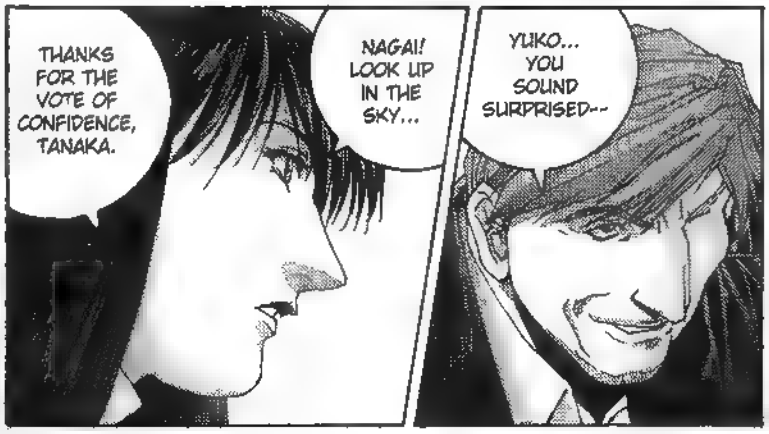
HERE, YUKO-- PEACE OFFERING.
WHAT'S THIS, NAGAI?

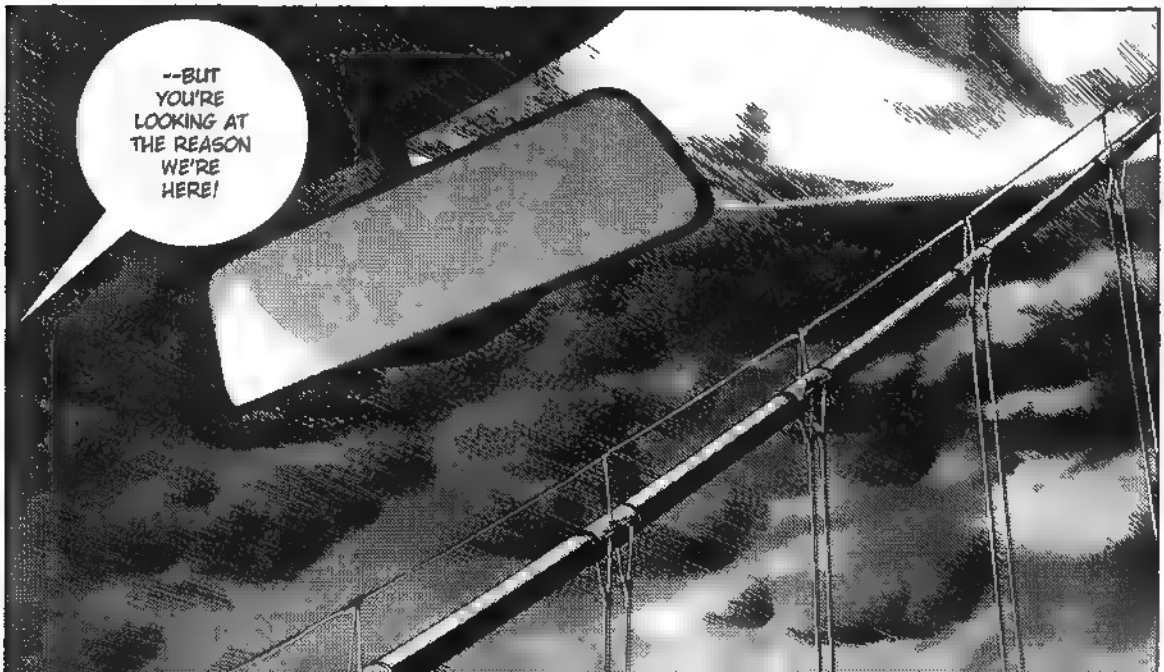
LITTLE GOOD-LUCK CHARM...ACTUALLY, IT WAS FROM ME IT'S A PRESENT FROM OUR GENEROUS SPONSOR. YOUR LOVING UNCLE...
!

MY UNCLE...? I DIDN'T KNOW HE CARED...


HE MUST CARE, YUKO-- YOU'RE HIS LITTLE TV STAR, AFTER ALL...
OH, YEAH, NAGAI... YOU'RE BACK IN MY GOOD GRACES NOW, ALL RIGHT.

SO YUKO IS MR. TOMIOKA'S NIECE?
YEAH--BUT THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR NETWORK WEATHER WOMAN'S METEORIC RISE TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT!

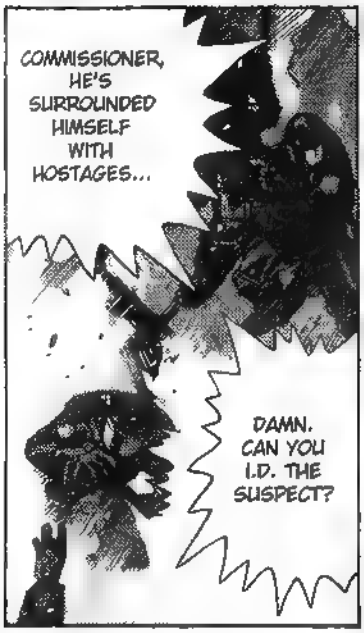

THANKS FOR THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, TANAKA.
NAGAI! LOOK UP IN THE SKY...
YUKO... YOU SOUND SURPRISED--

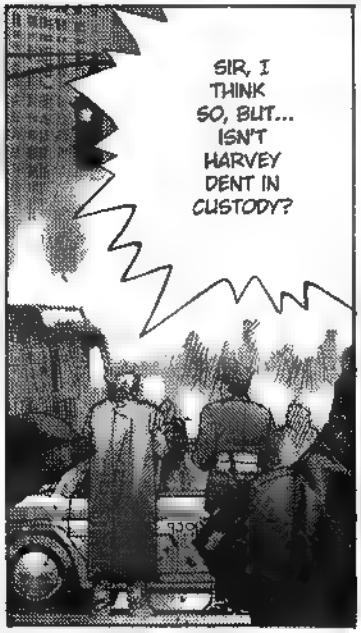

--BUT YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE REASON WE'RE HERE!

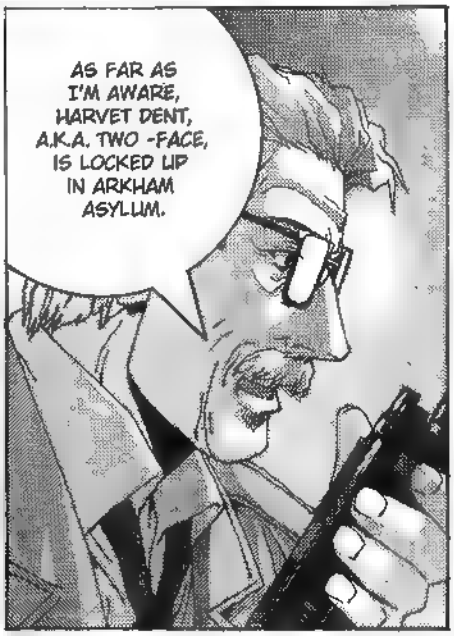
RRSSHH
WWRRHH
WELL, YUKO, AS YOUR PRODUCER, I'D SAY YOUR SPONSOR'S GOOD-LUCK CHARM IS WORKING JUST FINE...

THIS IS IT... HE'S HERE...
THIS IS MY CHANCE... TO FULFILL MY DREAM ASSIGNMENT...

HONK
HONNNNK
HONK
HONNNNK
HONK
COMMISSIONER, WE HAVE A VISUAL ON THE SUSPECT-- HE'S ON HIS FEET, PACING THE ROOM...
BETA UNIT LEADER, DO YOU HAVE A CLEAR SHOT?


COMMISSIONER, HE'S SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH HOSTAGES...
DAMN. CAN YOU I.D. THE SUSPECT?


SIR, I THINK SO, BUT... ISN'T HARVEY DENT IN CUSTODY?


AS FAR AS I'M AWARE, HARVET DENT, A.K.A. TWO -FACE, IS LOCKED UP IN ARKHAM ASYLUM.

WELL, COMMISSIONER, UNLESS THERE'RE *TWO* TWO-FACES IN GOTHAM...
...THE REPORTS OF HIS IMPRISONMENT HAVE BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED!

HONK
HONK
HONK
DAMN TRAFFIC IS WORSE THAN TOKYO!
POLICE RADIO SAYS IT'S ALL GOING DOWN AT THE GEYSER BUILDING--IF IMAI'S MAPS ARE RIGHT, YOU'RE BETTER OFF GETTING THERE ON FOOT.
SURE, AKI. BUT EVEN IF WE GET THROUGH THE CROWDS AND PAST THE COPS, HOW DO WE GET TO THE SCENE?
HERE'S SOMETHING...
MAP SAYS THERE'S AN ELEVATED WALKWAY A BLOCK EAST THAT CONNECTS TO THE GEYSER BUILDING.
ANY LUCK, WE CAN USE IT TO SLIP PAST THE POLICE CORDON...
TAKE THE WHEEL, AKI-- EVERYBODY ELSE GRAB YOUR GEAR AND LET'S GO!
SCREEE
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE WONDERING... I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES.
WILL I LIVE THROUGH THIS? WILL I DIE? YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE I HAVE THE ANSWERS. BUT I DON'T.
I AM NOT THE ONE WHO WILL DECIDE YOUR FATE-- IT'S THE COIN. IT DECIDES TO ACQUIT OR CONVICT--

--AND TWO-FACE MERELY CARRIES OUT THE SENTENCE!
SNATCH
-:HUFF:- POLICE RADIO SAID HE WAS ON THE 22ND FLOOR... LUCKY FOR US TWO-FACE DIDN'T DECIDE TO HOLE UP IN THE PENTHOUSE...
ALMOST AS LUCKY THE COPS DIDN'T COMMANDEER THIS FIRE EXIT.
LET'S HOPE WE STAY LUCKY... START YOUR CAMERA ROLLING, IMA!.
WE'RE ROLLING, NAGAI...IF YOU'VE GOT A PLAN, NOW IS THE TIME TO LET US IN ON IT...
SURE. NOW, WE WAIT. JUST OUTSIDE THE OFFICE WHERE THE HOSTAGES ARE GROUPED.
WHEN THE POLICE STORM THE PLACE, THEY'LL BE COMING FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. WE'LL CATCH IT ALL-- WITH YUKO'S ON-SCREEN COMMENTARY.
SOUNDS GOOD, NAGAI.
22
MEANTIME, WE'RE JUST MICE IN THE CORNER, WAITNG.
LAST DOOR, ON THE LEFT, I THINK. LET'S MOVE IN.

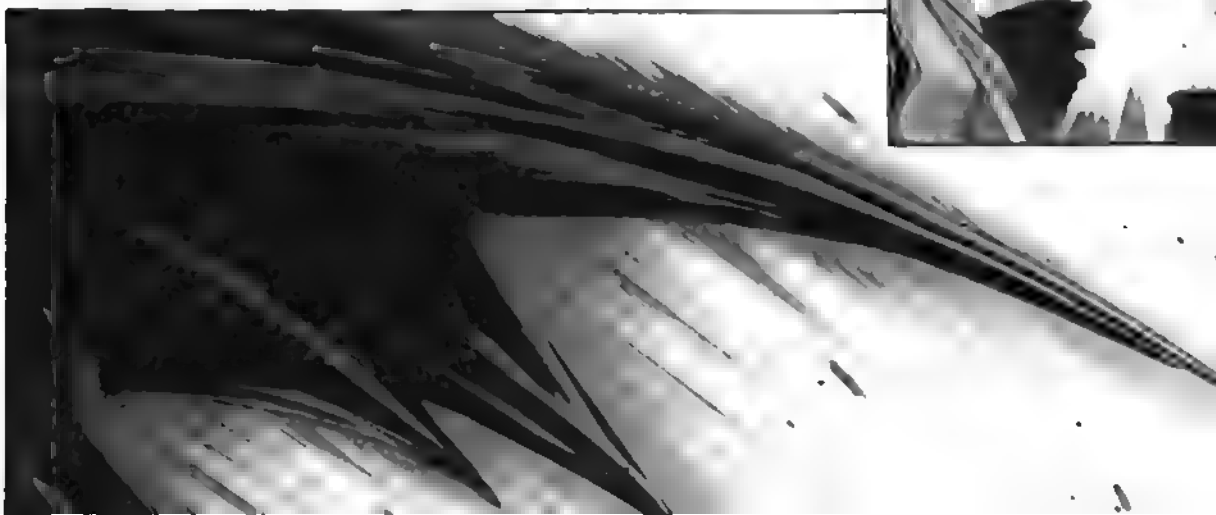
HEADS IT IS.
HOW SAD-- THE SCARRED SIDE. FATE CAN BE SO CRUEL... BUT WHO KNOWS BETTER THAN I?
BLAM!
AS FOR THE REST OF YOU, I WISH I COULD SAY YOUR ODDS FOR SURVIVAL HAVE IMPROVED-- BUT ALAS, THEY REMAIN THE SAME!
WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY-- YOURS IS TO BE JUDGED BY THE TOSS OF A COIN.
DO NOT THINK ILL OF ME.
MINE IS TO DO FATE'S BIDDING.
...EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT, WON'T YOU?
THIS IS BAD.
WE HAVE GUESTS...
--OUT-OF-- TOWNERS, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT!
THAT'S AN UNDER-STATEMENT...

FRIENDS FROM JAPAN-- WELCOME TO AMERICA!

REPORTS THAT SHOTS HAVE BEEN FIRED AT THE HOSTAGE SCENE ARE COMING IN.
YET POLICE HAVE TAKEN NO ACTION IN RESPONSE MORE AFTER THIS

COMMISSIONER, HE'S KILLING HOSTAGES! THE MAYOR WANTS TO KNOW WHY YOU HAVEN'T LET THE SWAT TEAMS MOVE IN!
TELL THE MAYOR I'M CONSIDERING OUR OPTIONS AND WAITING FOR BACKUP

AH-- HERE IT IS NOW

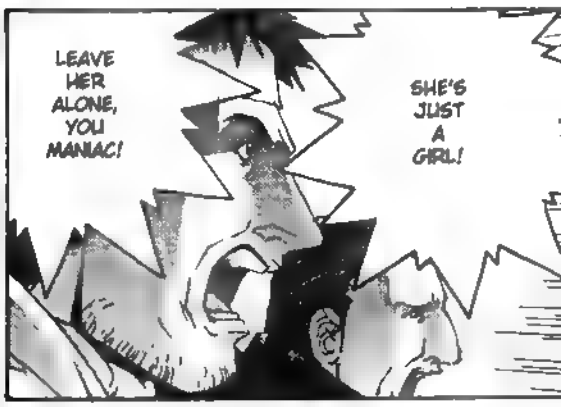


A TV CREW! FATE CAN BE KIND!
PLEASE, COME IN... AND TURN YOUR CAMERAS ON!
WITH YOUR HELP, THE PUBLIC WILL SEE THAT I AM NOT SOME PETTY CRIMINAL WHO DEMANDS RANSOM AND SAFE PASSAGE!
INSTEAD, THEY WILL LEARN THAT I AM THE INSTRUMENT OF FATE ITSELF!
IT WAS FATE THAT CAST ME IN THIS ROLE AS THE ARBITER OF LIFE AND DEATH.
I DID NOT SELECT THESE HOSTAGES-- FATE DID!
FATE HAS ALSO SPARED YOU, CAMERAMAN... TO RECORD AND TRANSMIT MY ACTS TO THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION.
LET ME BE JUDGED THERE, BY MY DEEDS...NOT VICIOUS RUMORS.
EVEN NOW FATE WORKS HARD TO MAKE IT UP TO ME--GIVING ME THIS FINE PRESENT...
...MEDIA! FROM A FOREIGN LAND! OBJECTIVE, FAIR-MINDED...
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
MY ADVANCE RESEARCH SAID HARVEY DENT IS LOCKED AWAY IN ARKHAM ASYLUM, UNDER MAXIMUM SECURITY...

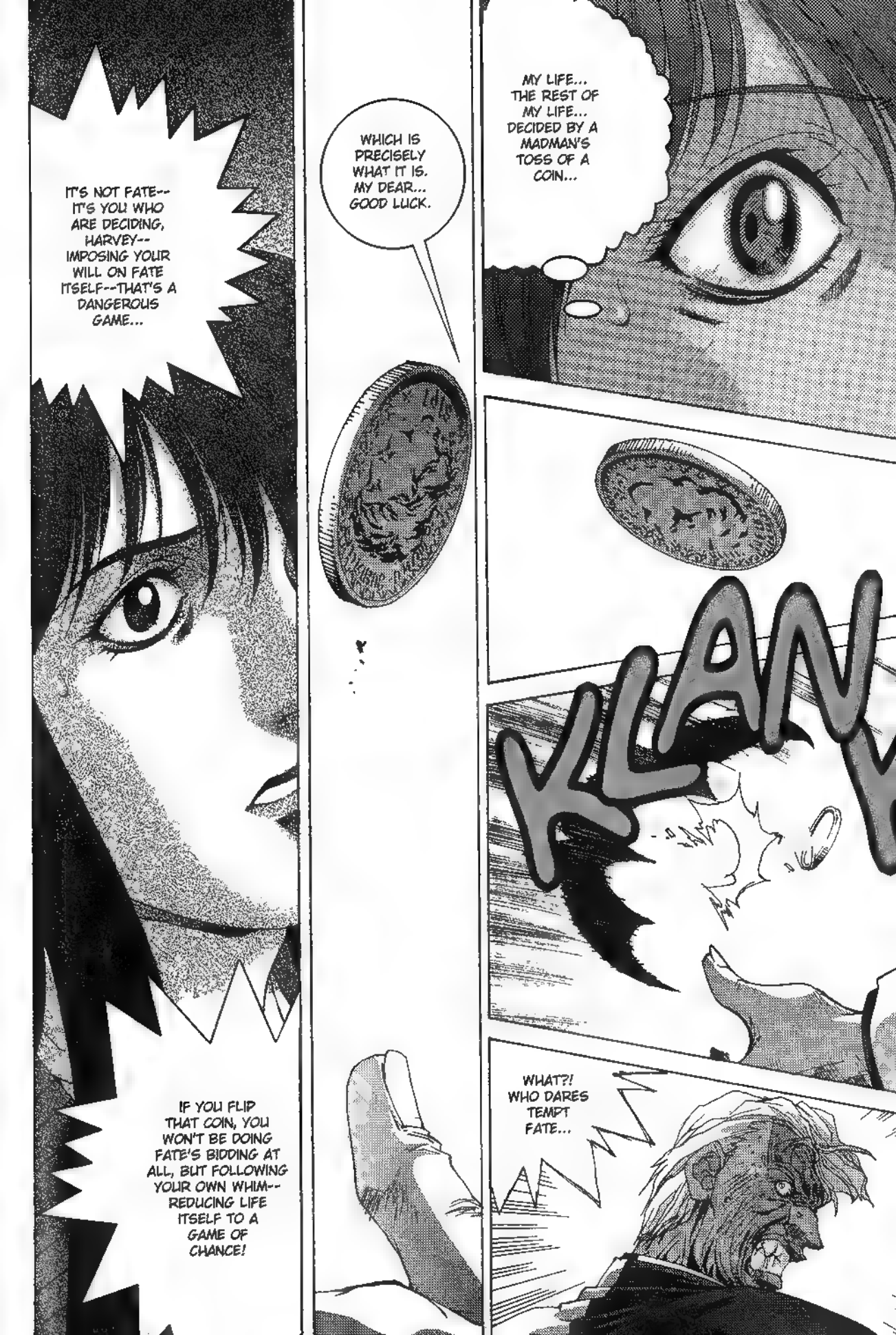
WHEN DID YOU ESCAPE?

THERE IS NO ESCAPING FATE... ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE, YOUNG LADY...
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, DEAR?

YUKO... YUKO YAGI.


LEAVE HER ALONE, YOU MANIAC!
SHE'S JUST A GIRL!

HOW DISAPPOINTING. SUCH BACKWARD NOTIONS FROM SO REFINED A CULTURE...
IN THIS COUNTRY WE TREAT WOMEN AS EQUALS. WITH RESPECT.


MY LIFE... THE REST OF MY LIFE... DECIDED BY A MADMAN'S TOSS OF A COIN...
WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT IT IS, MY DEAR... GOOD LUCK.
KLANK
WHAT?! WHO DARES TEMPT FATE...
IT'S NOT FATE-- IT'S YOU WHO ARE DECIDING, HARVEY-- IMPOSING YOUR WILL ON FATE ITSELF--THAT'S A DANGEROUS GAME...
IF YOU FLIP THAT COIN, YOU WON'T BE DOING FATE'S BIDDING AT ALL, BUT FOLLOWING YOUR OWN WHIM-- REDUCING LIFE ITSELF TO A GAME OF CHANCE!

MAX

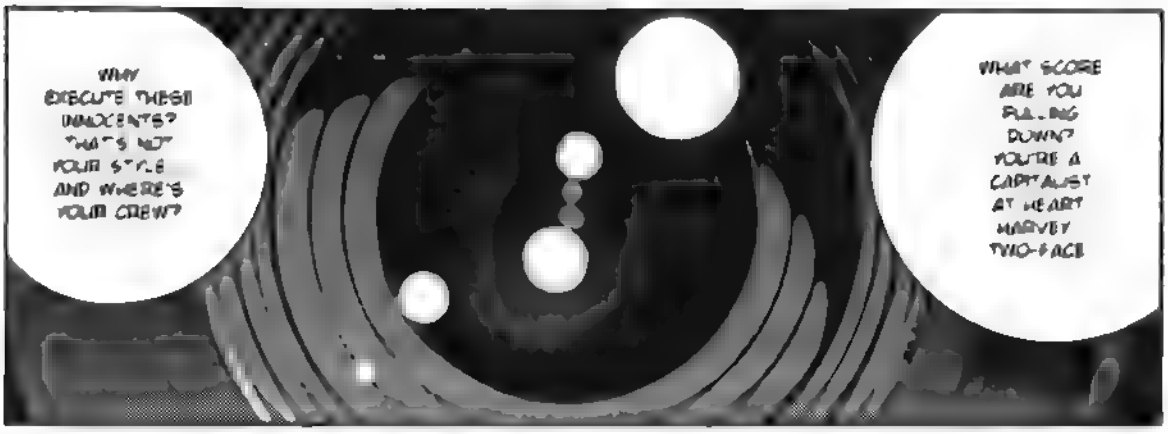
RRRWRRLLL

BATMAN! WHAT KEPT YOU?

PUT THE GUN DOWN, HARVEY... LET'S GET YOU BACK TO ARKHAM...
...IF YOU DON'T PAY ME THE COURTESY OF USING MY PREFERRED IDENTITY... TWO-FACE!
MY NAME IS NOT HARVEY, AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET ALONG AT ALL WELL...
AND IT WILL BE YOU WHO DECIDES THE FATE OF THIS JAPANESE BLOSSOM, BATMAN--
...UNLESS, OF COURSE, THE TOSS OF MY COIN DICTATES THEY MUST.
BUT YOU DROPPED YOUR COIN, TWO-FACE...
STAY FROZEN, LIKE THE STILTED FOOL YOU ARE, AND WE'LL GET ALONG FINE... AND THESE HOSTAGES WON'T DIE...
YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T THROW MONEY AROUND LIKE THAT...

LIKE ME TO GET IT FOR YOU?

YOU STAY PUT! OR THE GIRL SAYS SAYONARA
WHY TWO-FACE?


WHY EXECUTE THESE INNOCENTS? THAT'S NOT YOUR STYLE AND WHERE'S YOUR CREW?
WHAT SCORE ARE YOU RUBBING DOWN? YOU'RE A CAPITALIST AT HEART HARVEY TWO-FACE

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN?
NOTHING-- I DO FATE'S BIDDING, NOW.
WITH A TOSS OF YOUR COIN?
A TOSS OF MY COIN-- YES
WELL, THEN, HARVEY TWO-FACE . THAT MEANS THE YOUNG LADY LIVES-- IT'S HEADS, AFTER ALL
HEADS?!
HE'S RIGHT-- I WON. I LIVE!
BUT HE CHEATED... KNOCKED THE COIN OUT OF MY HAND...
SHIFT
SHIFT

DAMN!
CLATTER
THAT'S ENOUGH, HARVEY.
BATMAN! STOP HIM-- PLEASE!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHO I AM, BATMAN?
I'M TWO-FACE-- I'VE GOT TWO OF EVERY-THING--

BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
--AND THIS SECOND ONE'S A REAL KILLER!
BUDDA
BUDDA
POK POK POK
POK POK POK
POK POK POK
POK
POK

BUDDA
STAND STILL, YOU COWARD! EMBRACE YOUR DAMN DESTINY!
NOT TODAY, HARVEY ..
VIP VIP
NOOOO!!
BUDDA
BUDDA
AND DEFINITELY NOT BY YOU!
KRRRSHH

RRR

RRR

SSSSHAAA

NOOOOO!!

IS... IS THIS MY FATE?

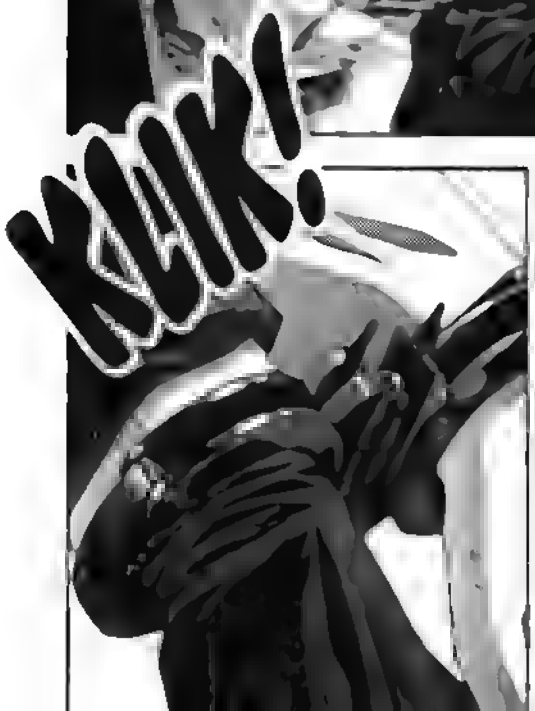
ARE YOU... GOING TO... LET ME FALL?

I DON'T KNOW, HARVEY...

...MAYBE I SHOULD FLIP A COIN.

I THOUGHT I THOUGHT THIS THIS WOULD BE FUN
IS HE... CRYING?

LET'S GET YOU BACK HOME HARVEY
BACK TO ARKHAM
WHAT A FREAK... NOT SO TOUGH WHEN THE LAWS ARE DOWN


KLIK!

I TOLD YOU BEFORE I M NOT HARVEY ARKHAM'S NOT MY HOME

BE GENTLE WITH HIM, JIM-- HE SEEMS DERANGED IN A WHOLE NEW WAY...
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE? DENT'S A PSYCHOPATH-- YET HE SEEMED ALMOST PATHETIC BACK THERE...
BATMAN! I WANTED TO THANK YOU--
YOU CAN THANK ME, MISS--
--BY GETTING THAT MICROPHONE OUT OF MY FACE.
PLEASE, BATMAN-- I'M YUKO YAGI. MY CREW AND I HAVE COME ALL THE WAY FROM TOKYO TO PROFILE YOU.
WHEN I'M DOING MY JOB, I KEEP A LOW PROFILE, YOUNG LADY. EXCUSE ME...
KLK
KLK
BATMAN, PLEASE! A QUESTION ABOUT HARVEY DENT!
DOESN'T HE USUALLY FLIP HIS COIN TO DECIDE BETWEEN ACTS OF GOOD AND EVIL? WASN'T HIS BEHAVIOR TONIGHT...ODD... EVEN FOR HIM?

HMM...I CAN SEE THIS LINE OF QUESTIONING ISN'T GETTING ME ANYWHERE. BESIDES, WHAT I'M REALLY HERE FOR IS AN INTERVIEW. JUST NAME THE TIME AND PLACE AND WE'LL--
LOOKS LIKE BATMAN NEEDS SAVING, FOR ONCE...
YOUNG LADY, YOU ARE A MATERIAL WITNESS. YOU NEED TO COME WITH US FOR QUESTIONING.
SIR, I AM YUKO YAGI, WITH GENERAL NETWORK NIPPON--I HAVE THE PROPER PRESS CREDENTIALS, WHICH I--
HEY, YUKO! YOUR STORY'S GETTING AWAY!
MS. YAGI, THESE OFFICERS WILL ACCOMPANY YOU TO HEAD-QUARTERS--
NO!
THERE'S NO TIME!
I'M NOT ASKING, MISS--
EXCUSE, ME SIR...I NEED TO FIND MY PRODUCER...
IAMI! GET OVER HERE!
HEY! STOP!

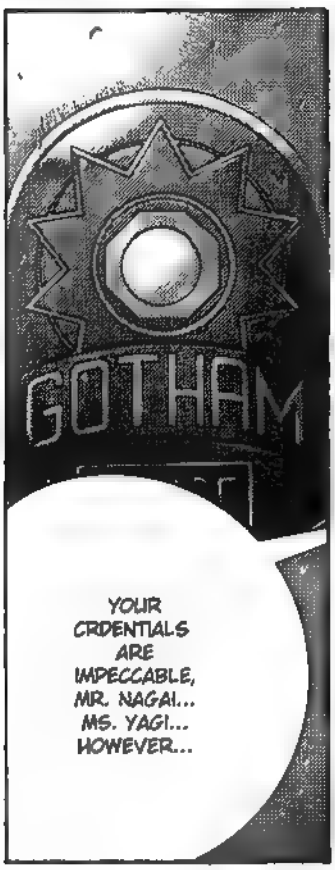
DAMN-- WE'RE MISSING THIS! WHAT A SHOT!
THUMP!
WHERE IS THAT IAMI...
KLIK!
TONK TONK

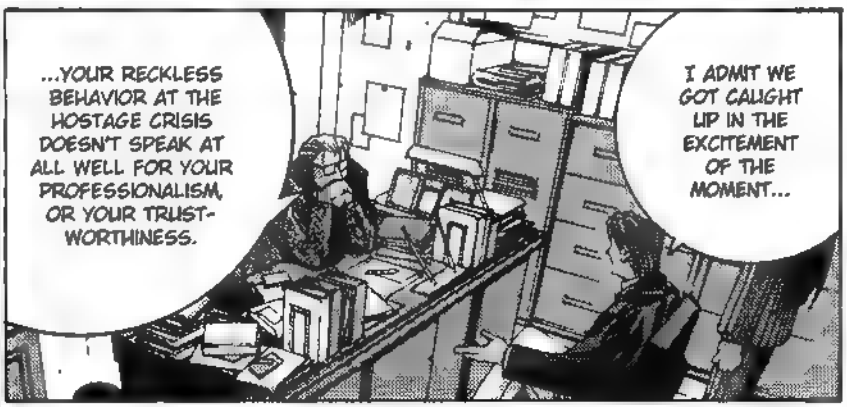
BOOM

VROOOO

VRR
VRR
VRR
VRR
VROOM
WHAT A GREAT BIG BEAUTIFUL STORY YOU'LL MAKE...

"COMMISSIONER GORDON, AS MS. YAGI'S PRODUCER I CAN ASSURE YOU WE INTEND TO PORTRAY GOTHAM CITY AND ITS HERO POSITIVELY...AS FOR CREDENTIALS..."


GOTHAM
YOUR CREDENTIALS ARE IMPECCABLE, MR. NAGAI... MS. YAGI... HOWEVER...


...YOUR RECKLESS BEHAVIOR AT THE HOSTAGE CRISIS DOESN'T SPEAK AT ALL WELL FOR YOUR PROFESSIONALISM, OR YOUR TRUST-WORTHINESS.
I ADMIT WE GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE MOMENT...

YOUR CONDUCT WAS INEXCUSABLE-- COMPARABLE TO OUR WORST YELLOW JOURNALISM.
SIR, WE WERE MERELY DOING OUR JOB. WHEN NEWS IS BREAKING, A REPORTER--
YUKO, PLEASE. I'LL HANDLE THIS.

I RECOMMEND YOU RETURN TO TOKYO WITH THE FOOTAGE YOU HAVE. FRANKLY, I WOULDN'T ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW WITH BATMAN FOR YOU, EVEN IF I COULD.
PLEASE RECONSIDER, COMMISSIONER. I KNOW WE'VE GOTTEN OFF TO A ROCKY START--
BUT I AM CERTAIN WE CAN WORK ALL THIS OUT...

BRRING!!!
BRRING!!!
GORDON HERE-- WHAT?
WHAT THE HELL...IS THIS SOME SICK JOKE?
GOOD LORD... IT--IT CAN'T BE...
I HAVE A... STRANGE ENDING FOR YOUR STORY, MS. YAGI, MR. NAGAI...
THE SUSPECT DIED ON THE WAY TO THE COUNTY JAIL.

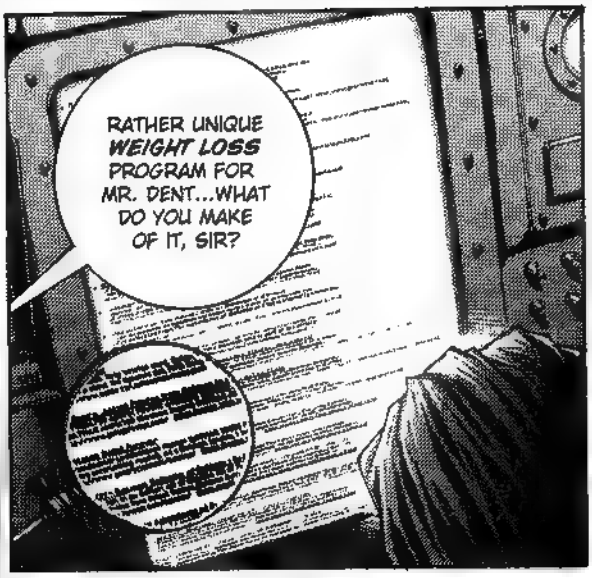
"ACCORDING TO THE OFFICERS IN THE SQUAD CAR, TWO-FACE BEGAN TO TREMBLE, TO SHAKE... TO WRITHE IN AGONY...
"...AND WITHIN SECONDS, HE WAS DEAD... HIS TISSUE WITHERED, APPARENTLY... VIRTUALLY MUMMIFIED...
"THE, UH... 'MUMMY' IS IN THE CORONER'S HANDS, NOW.
"WE'LL SEE WHAT SCIENCE HAS TO SAY ABOUT THIS BIZARRE EPISODE..."
IN THE MEANTIME, GENTLEMEN... MS YAGI...I WOULD SUGGEST YOU COMPLETE YOUR STORY BACK IN TOKYO.
TAKE YOUR TABLOID FOOTAGE AND GO HOME!
WHAT ARE YOU HIDING, COMMIS-SIONER?
YUKO, TAKE IT EASY...
NO. COMMISSIONER, WE'RE IN THIS COUNTRY LEGALLY, WITH PROPER PRESS CREDENTIALS. YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO--
FORGET IT, YUKO. HE'S RIGHT. WE'VE GOT OUR STORY... LET'S GO.

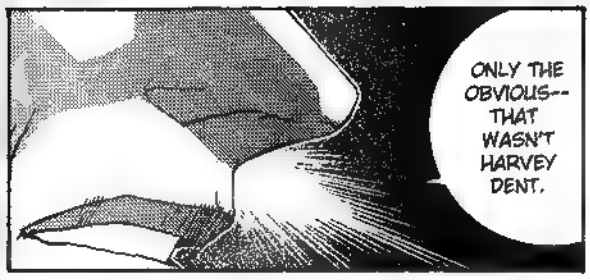
COMMISSIONER, WE'LL TAKE THE FIRST JET OUT TOMORROW...
...THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
"COOPERATION?" HE DRAGGED US AWAY FROM BATMAN LIKE HE WAS WORKING FOR HIM!
GREAT. NOTHING LIKE PUTTING UP A UNIFIED FRONT...
SLAM!
SO MUCH FOR INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELATIONS...
...BUT WHY DO I SUSPECT THAT PRODUCER ONLY THINKS HE'S IN CHARGE?
MS. YAGI IS MUCH MORE THAN THE BRATTY CUB REPORTER SHE APPEARS TO BE.
VRMMMMM
WE FLY TO AMERICA TO DO A STORY ON BATMAN... THEN TURN TAIL AND RUN HOME?
WHAT'S UP WITH NAGAI, ANYWAY? HE WANTS TO BAIL... JUST WHEN WE HAVE ONE OF BATMAN'S GREATEST ENEMIES DECOMPOSING ON US!

WELCOME HOME, SIR. YOU'VE HAD AN INTERESTING EVENING, I HEAR.
MORE INTERESTING THAN YOU KNOW, ALFRED.

GORDON CALLED ME ON MY WAY HERE--SEEMS "TWO-FACE" WENT UP IN SMOKE, SO TO SPEAK...
TAC TAC TAC

HEARD THAT ON THE POLICE RADIO, TOO, SIR. MUMMIFIED, THEY SAY.


RATHER UNIQUE WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM FOR MR. DENT...WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, SIR?


ONLY THE OBVIOUS--THAT WASN'T HARVEY DENT.

DENT IS ALIVE AND WELL AND BUTTONING HIS COAT UP IN THE BACK, IN A PADDED CELL AT ARKHAM.

STILL, I WOULD'VE BET MY LIFE THAT GUY WAS THE GENUINE DEMENTED ARTICLE...

YOU DID BET YOUR LIFE, SIR-- AS USUAL. WHOEVER THE IMPOSTOR WAS, HE WAS INDEED A MANIAC, AND YOU STOPPED HIM...

GOOD SHOW.

SO, THEN-- WHO WAS THE IMPOSTOR AT THE GEYSER BUILDING?

AND WHY DO I THINK THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING?

"THAT JAPANESE REPORTER-- SHE SENSED IT. SHE HAD BETTER INSTINCTS THAN I DID."

*"PERHAPS BECAUSE SHE WAS AN **OBSERVER** RATHER THAN A **PARTICIPANT** IN THE CONFLICT, SIR?"*

MAYBE-- BUT MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO QUICK TO DISMISS MS. YAGI...

SHALL I START THE COMPUTER SEARCH FOR POSSIBLE CAUSES OF THIS MUMMIFICATION PROCESS, SIR?

AFTER SUPPER, ALFRED... WE'RE GOING OUT. THAT CORPSE IS IN NO HURRY... I'M TAKING DINNER AT THAT REPORTER'S HOTEL...

KLIP
KLOP
KLIP
KLOP

KLOP!
KLIP!
KLOP!
KLIP!
KLOP!
KLIP!
STEADY... PROBABLY NOTHING... NOBODY...
BUT THEN... THIS IS GOTHAM CITY...
CRIME CAPITAL OF THE ENTIRE U.S....
HIGHEST HOMICIDE RATE IN... IN THE WORLD, PROBABLY...
DON'T PANIC... HOTEL'S JUST ANOTHER TWO BLOCKS...
KLOP!
...STAY COOL, YUKO, STAY COOL...
OH!! WHO IS THAT...?
YOU NEED A LIFT SOMEWHERE, SWEETIE?
NO THANK YOU... I'M ALMOST HOME.
HOW'S THAT POSSIBLE? YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOU'RE FROM AROUND HERE.

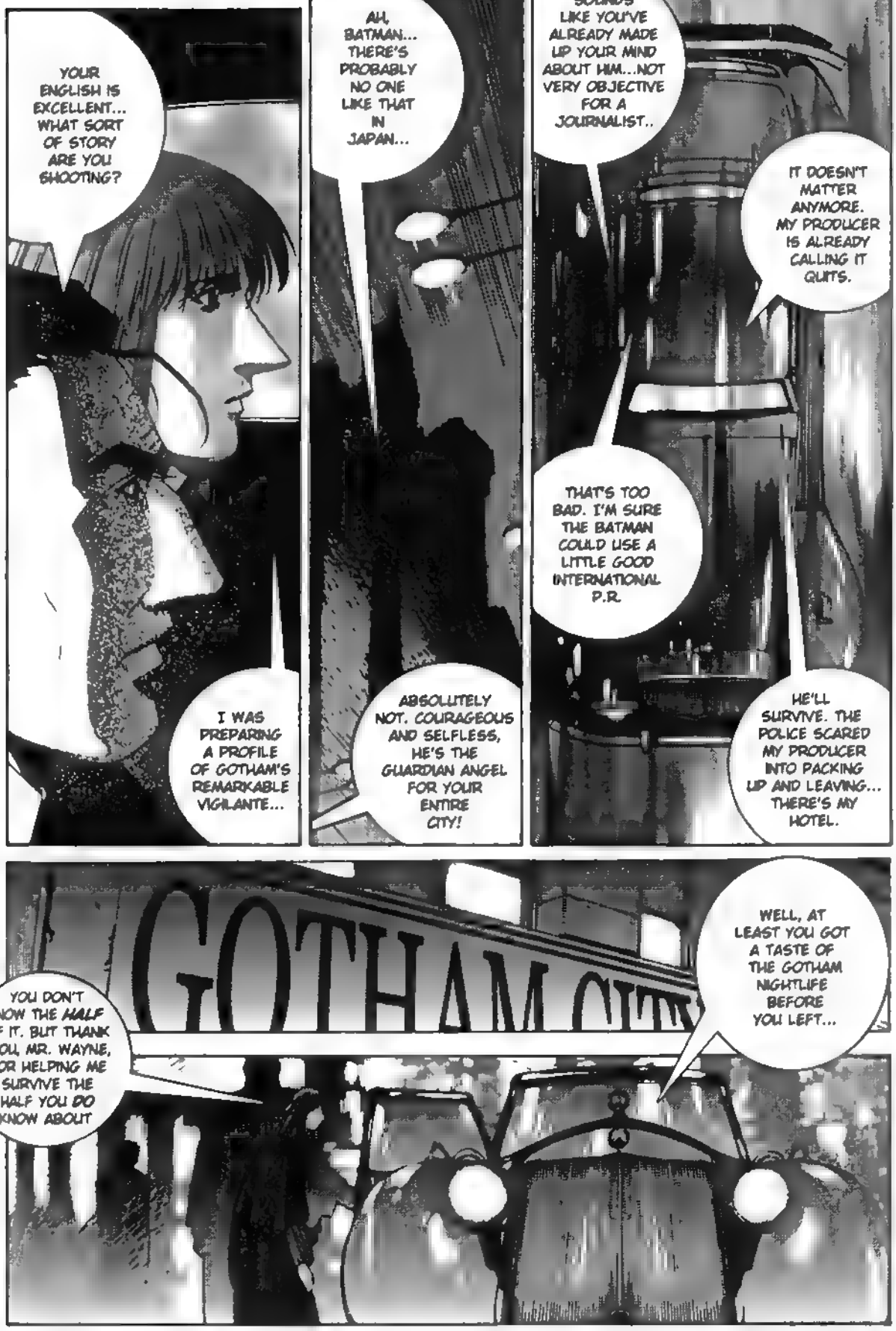
"WELL, THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS WHAT THEY APPEAR TO BE! AND I'VE GOTTA GO. HAVE A NICE NIGHT."
"OH... WE WILL-- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER-- WE WILL..."
PRETTY QUIET, TONIGHT, ALFRED-- GUESS BATMAN'S PATROLS LAST WEEK CHASED THE RATS INTO THEIR HOLES...
...BUT MAYBE NOT ALL OF THEM...
ALFRED, TURN AROUND AND HEAD BACK A BLOCK... SOMETHING WE BETTER CHECK OUT...
I THOUGHT YOU WERE TAKING THE NIGHT OFF, SIR.
BATMAN IS... BUT BRUCE WAYNE'S STILL A CONCERNED CITIZEN, RIGHT?
SCREEE

KLIP KLOP
KLIP KLOP
KLIP
KLOP
KLIP KLOP
KLIP KLOP
KLIP KLOP
NOT...
SO BAD...
ABOUT...

YOU'VE GOT US WRONG, BABY. WE'RE THE WELCOME WAGON.
YOU GOT THEM BACK WHERE YOU COME FROM?
WE COME TO SHOW YOU THE SIGHTS--LOTS OF FUN IN AN ALL-NIGHT TOWN LIKE GOTHAM... COME WITH US...
DON'T BE SHY... WE DON'T BITE-- YOU'LL LIKE BEIN' POPULAR...
AND WE JUST KNOW YOU'RE GONNA BE THE LIFE OF THE PARTY--
SOUNDS LIKE FUN... BUT I'LL PASS... OKAY?
CRESCENDO
COOL RIDE!
WHAT THE HELL?!

GET IN!
WHAT...?
CHOOSE YOUR COMPANY, LADY-- NOW!
IT'S JUST SOME RICH MOOK! GRAB HER!
YOU CONVINCED ME..
A SLAM
SKWEEEEL
VROOMMM
WHO THE HELL DOES THAT IDIOT THINK HE IS-- BATMAN?

THANK YOU-- YOU SAVED MY... WELL, LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU SAVED, OKAY?
OKAY--AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE YOU WON'T GO OUT WALKING AFTER DARK IN THIS CITY, ANYMORE. .ALONE, ANYWAY.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO NAIVE-- I'M AFRAID I WAS... PREOCCUPIED.
YOU'RE... YOU'RE BRUCE WAYNE, AREN'T YOU?
GUILTY. YOU'RE FROM JAPAN, AREN'T YOU?
YES-- I'M YUKO YAGI .I'M A REPORTER, HERE WITH A TV CREW.


YOUR ENGLISH IS EXCELLENT... WHAT SORT OF STORY ARE YOU SHOOTING?
I WAS PREPARING A PROFILE OF GOTHAM'S REMARKABLE VIGILANTE...
AH, BATMAN... THERE'S PROBABLY NO ONE LIKE THAT IN JAPAN...
ABSOLUTELY NOT. COURAGEOUS AND SELFLESS, HE'S THE GUARDIAN ANGEL FOR YOUR ENTIRE CITY!
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE ALREADY MADE UP YOUR MIND ABOUT HIM...NOT VERY OBJECTIVE FOR A JOURNALIST..
IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE. MY PRODUCER IS ALREADY CALLING IT QUITS.
THAT'S TOO BAD. I'M SURE THE BATMAN COULD USE A LITTLE GOOD INTERNATIONAL P.R.
HE'LL SURVIVE. THE POLICE SCARED MY PRODUCER INTO PACKING UP AND LEAVING... THERE'S MY HOTEL.
GOTHAM CITY
WELL, AT LEAST YOU GOT A TASTE OF THE GOTHAM NIGHTLIFE BEFORE YOU LEFT...
YOU DON'T KNOW THE *HALF* OF IT. BUT THANK YOU, MR. WAYNE, FOR HELPING ME SURVIVE THE HALF YOU *DO* KNOW ABOUT

LISTEN, YUKO-- IF YOU SHOULD CHANGE YOUR PLANS AND STAY A FEW DAYS, PERHAPS WE COULD GET TOGETHER AGAIN--
THAT WOULD BE LOVELY... BRUCE.
YES, I THINK I'D BE WILLING TO SEE A HANDSOME BILLIONAIRE AGAIN...
...PARTICULARLY ONE WITH A REPUTATION FOR BEING A CONFIDANT OF THE BATMAN...
STRICTLY BUSINESS, YUKO?... THEN WHY IS YOUR HEART POUNDING LIKE A TRIPHAMMER?

THE NEXT MORNING...
MORNING, NAGAI.
I'VE MADE ARRANGEMENTS-- WE'RE LEAVING THIS AFTER-NOON. GET PACKED.
I'VE DECIDED TO STAY A WHILE...
I'M YOUR PRODUCER, AND I SAY WE'RE LEAVING.
AND I'M YOUR NETWORK SPONSOR'S NIECE, SO YOU CAN LEAVE IF YOU LIKE-- I'LL HIRE MY OWN CREW.
IS THAT A THREAT?
NO, NAGAI-- I'M JUST GOING MY OWN WAY. FEEL FREE TO GO YOURS.
LOOK-- MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT...MAYBE WE COULD USE AN EXTRA DAY... SHOOT SOME B-ROLL...DO SOME RESEARCH...
WELL... THAT'S WONDERFUL, NAGAI. THANKS FOR--
24 HOURS, YUKO. THAT'S IT. SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME TO SHAPE WHAT WE HAVE INTO SOME KIND OF STORY. DON'T GET TOO HOPEFUL, THOUGH. UNLESS WE GET LUCKY--

"--IT WON'T BE MUCH MORE THAN A SALVAGE JOB..."
BWH
OOOM!!
CRESSHHH!
KA-
WHOOM
CRNKSLU
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!
LAST NIGHT TWO-FACE--
NOW THIS!
"HAS ANY TERRORIST GROUP CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY?"
"NOT YET, COMMISSIONER. AND I DON'T THINK THEY WILL."

—GEE! I THINK THE WAY THAT'S RESPONSIBLE HAS BEEN WATCHING THE WHOLE NIGHT!
—THE PENGUIN!
—AND LET THE BATMAN KNOW HE'S DOWN!
HEY!!
—DON'T WORRY, I'LL BE BACK AND YOUR CREW CAN START OUT OF WHERE WE WERE YESTERDAY!

--AND WE JUST HAPPENED TO STUMBLE ACROSS THIS ON OUR WAY BACK FROM A ROUTINE SHOOT.
ANY MORE TROUBLE, AND I'LL GET YOUR VISAS REVOKED. UNDERSTOOD?
CERTAINLY, SIR.
GOOD. BUT JUST TO BE SURE...
GENTLEMEN?
YOU HEARD THE COMMISH, PEOPLE. BACK IT UP. ALL THE WAY. NOW!
COMMISSIONER! I MUST PROTEST! WE HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS ANY JOURNALISTS! WE REPRESENT THE EYES AND EARS OF THE PUBLIC--
--A PUBLIC THAT HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW THE TRUTH!
GREAT. NOW I'M WONDERING IF FOREIGN NATIONALS CAN FILE CIVIL SUITS--
SQWAKKK!
SQWAKKK!
IT'S COMING FROM AROUND THE CORNER--
JUST OVER THIS PILE OF DEBRIS--
SQWAKKK!
IT'S--
--HIM.

RRRRR
SSSSHH
RIDDLE ME THIS! WHEN IS THE RIDDLER NOT THE RIDDLER?
WEEEEOOOO
WEEEEOOO
"CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS? SIX JEWELRY STORES HIT IN THREE HOURS-- AND NOW THE PERP'S HOLED UP INSIDE WINSTON KARTIER'S!
"IT'S LIKE HE'S JUST *WAITIN'* FOR SOMETHIN'-- OR SOMEONE I'M GONNA TAKE A WILD GUESS--
"--AND SAY IT AIN'T US!"

STILL, IT WOULDN'T HURT TO SURPRISE HIM WITH SOME UNEXPECTED GUESTS--
PLAYTIME IS OVER, EDWARD.
BATMAN! OH, BATMAN... I HAVE THE BEST RIDDLE FOR YOU...
I'D RATHER YOU ANSWER MY RIDDLE--
YOU AGAIN? ANOTHER RESEARCH TRIP?
WE'RE REPORTERS, COMMISSIONER. IT'S WHAT WE DO.
whrrrr
whrrrr
whrrrr
ARE YOU THE RIDDLER?
KRAK
NO...NO FAIR... THAT'S MY RIDDLE...
THE BATMAN HAS JUST CAPTURED ANOTHER OF HIS DEADLIEST FOES...OR HAS HE?
TVK

YOU, YOU SPOILED MY MEAL!

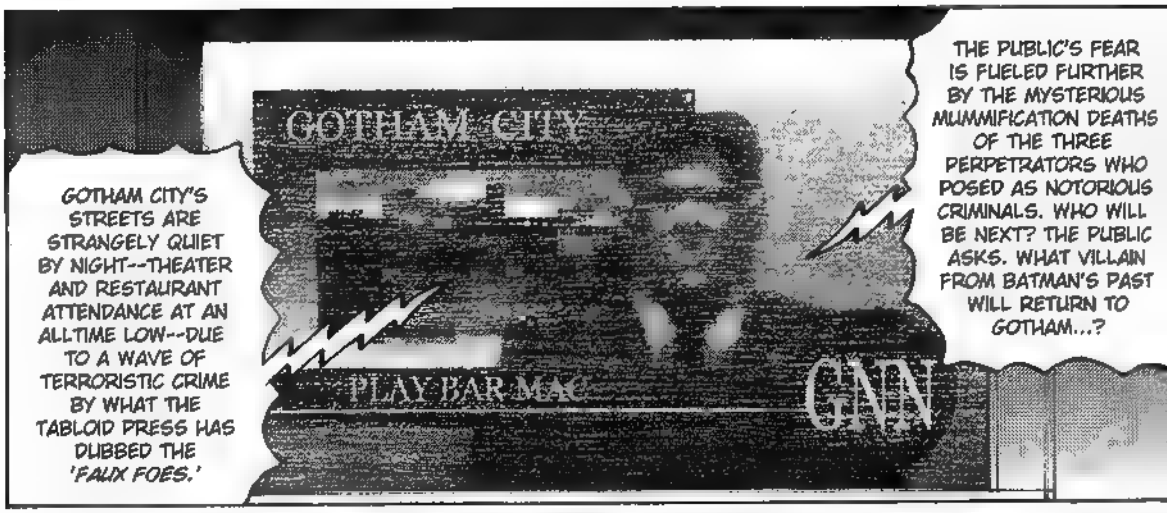
CRYING AGAIN! LIKE TWO-FACE EMOTIONAL PARODIES OF THEMSELVES... HELL-BENT ON NOTHING SO MUCH AS SELF-DESTRUCTION...

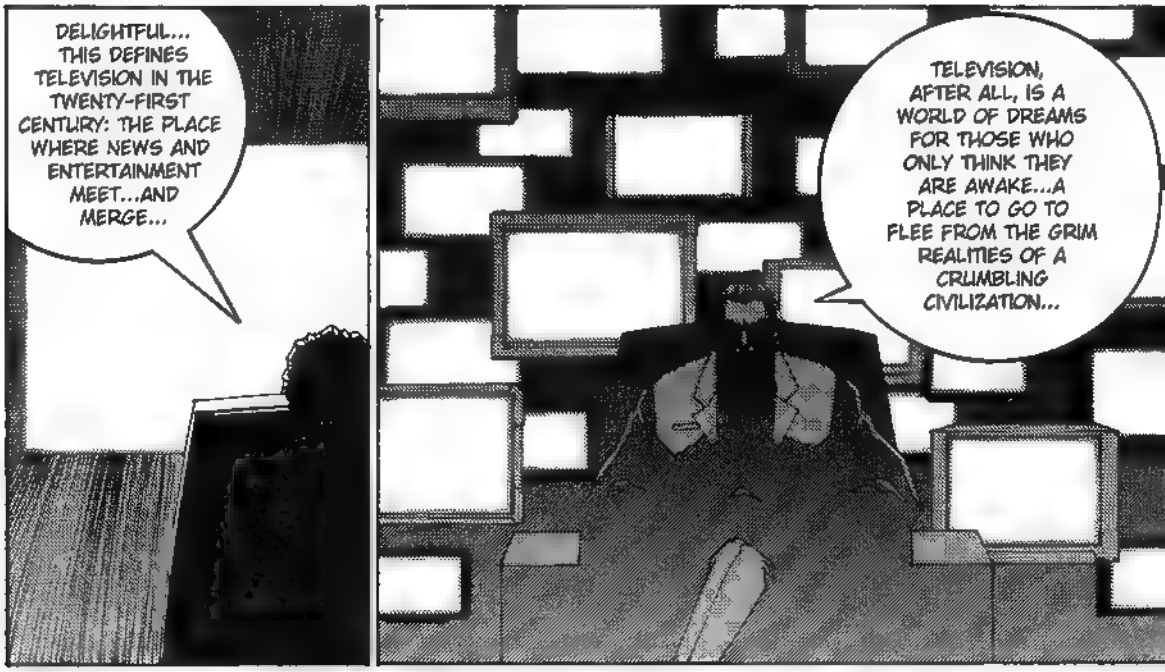
JIM--IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY GUESSED

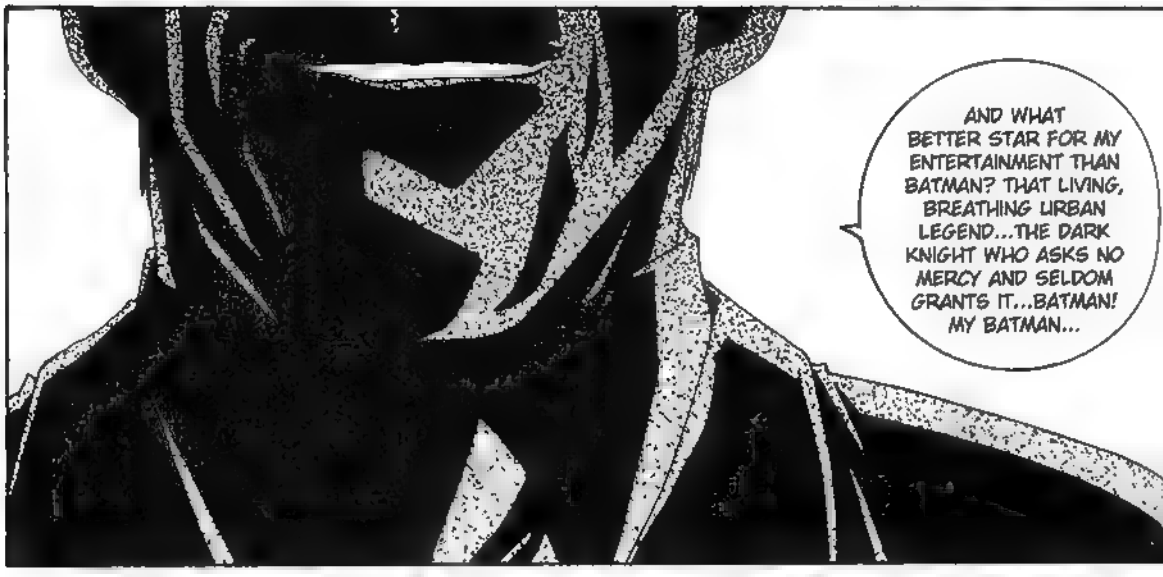
" NONE OF THIS IS WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE... "
DEAD! BOTH DEAD BEFORE THEY HIT THE STATIONHOUSE A NIGHT IN HELL

" AND ALL WE'VE GOT TO SHOW FOR IT IS TWO MORE MUMMIES IN THE MORGUE. "

The Gotham Times
YUKO YOU WERE RIGHT TO TALK ME INTO STAYING THIS IS A SENSATIONAL STORY
BOTH CRIMINALS DIED SHORTLY AFTER BEING TAKEN INTO CUSTODY-- AGAIN THEY BEGAN TO UNRAVEL SO WRITHE EVEN EMIT SMOKE BEFORE SHRIVELLING INTO HUMAN HUSKS
AND DNA TESTING PROVED IT CONCLUSIVELY-- THIS WAS NOT THE PENGUIN NOT THE RIDDLER RATHER IMPOSTORS
MORE THAN JUST IMPOSTORS-- VIRTUAL DOPPELGANGERS IDENTICAL TO THE ORIGINALS
--BUT FOR THE DNA ITSELF
INTERESTING...
TRACE ELEMENTS OF THE DISGUISER DRUG FANATIC IN ALL THREE CORPSES
THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN THE EXTREME EMOTIONALISM THE MANIC STATE BUT NOT THEIR PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS


GOTHAM CITY
PLAY BAR MAC
CNN
GOTHAM CITY'S STREETS ARE STRANGELY QUIET BY NIGHT--THEATER AND RESTAURANT ATTENDANCE AT AN ALLTIME LOW--DUE TO A WAVE OF TERRORISTIC CRIME BY WHAT THE TABLOID PRESS HAS DUBBED THE 'FAUX FOES.'
THE PUBLIC'S FEAR IS FUELED FURTHER BY THE MYSTERIOUS MUMMIFICATION DEATHS OF THE THREE PERPETRATORS WHO POSED AS NOTORIOUS CRIMINALS. WHO WILL BE NEXT? THE PUBLIC ASKS. WHAT VILLAIN FROM BATMAN'S PAST WILL RETURN TO GOTHAM...?

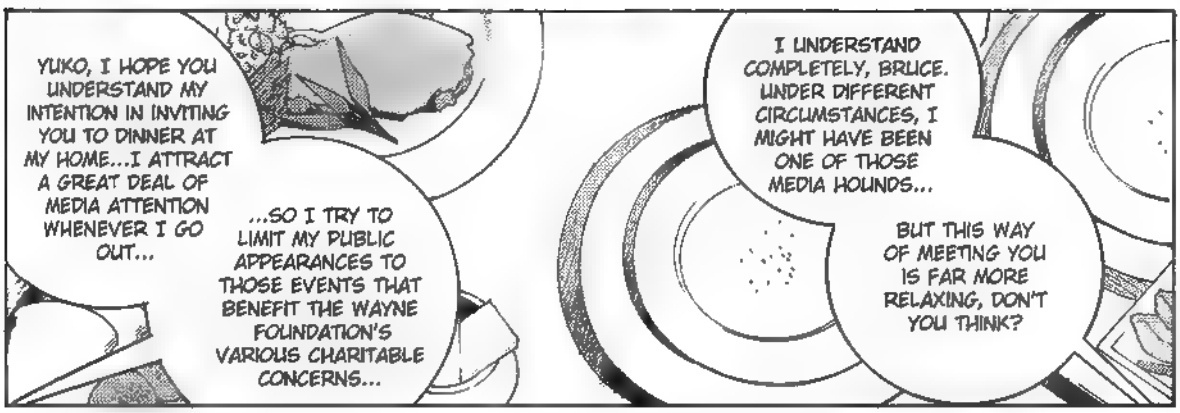

DELIGHTFUL... THIS DEFINES TELEVISION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE PLACE WHERE NEWS AND ENTERTAINMENT MEET...AND MERGE...
TELEVISION, AFTER ALL, IS A WORLD OF DREAMS FOR THOSE WHO ONLY THINK THEY ARE AWAKE...A PLACE TO GO TO FLEE FROM THE GRIM REALITIES OF A CRUMBLING CIVILIZATION...


AND WHAT BETTER STAR FOR MY ENTERTAINMENT THAN BATMAN? THAT LIVING, BREATHING URBAN LEGEND...THE DARK KNIGHT WHO ASKS NO MERCY AND SELDOM GRANTS IT...BATMAN! MY BATMAN...

BULLOCK, WHAT'S THE STORY ON FANATIC? I THOUGHT WE'D MADE REAL INROADS WITH THESE DESIGNER DRUGS.
HEY, SOONS WE TAKE ONE OFF THE STREET ANOTHER POPS UP TTAKE ITS PLACE
I GET YOUR POINT, BULLOCK--
GOTHAM'S A BIG TOWN, AND I'M NOT KIDDING MYSELF- ANYBODY WHO WANTS TO BUY FANATIC CAN FIND IT
STILL, NOT EVERYONE WHO TAKES THE DRUG TURNS INTO A MONSTER..
NOT SO'S Y'COULD SEE IT--
NO. THIS MUST BE THAT NEW VARIATION I'VE HEARD ABOUT
WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT IT'S TEN TIMES AS POWERFUL AS FANATIC.
COMMISSIONER, IT'S ALL JUST RUMOR SO FAR-- DRUG'S SO NEW, THEY AIN'T CALLIN' IT NOTHIN' YET--
--BUT Y'CAIN BET THEY'LL COME UP WITH SOME FANCY NAME FOR IT ONCE IT TAKES OFF
BUT WHERE IS IT MADE? LOCAL LABS? IS IT IMPORTED? BULLOCK, I NEED ANSWERS.. FAST

OH MY WILDEST DREAMS! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE WORKING WITH A MAN OF SUCH AS HANDSOME AS ALFRED!
THESE GAUNTLETS ARE ALL FINE AND DANDY, BUT I DON'T WANT TO BE FOUND WEARING THESE THE NEXT TIME I'M MADE OUT
AN INVITATION? PERHAPS HE WASN'T JUST BEING RUDE
MS. VERA KASI?
YES?
ALFRED PENNYWORTH MADAM— MR. WAYNE'S MAN
THE MASTER HAS REQUESTED THAT I CHAUFFEUR YOU TO HIS ESTATE IF YOU'RE AGREEABLE
I'M AGREEABLE! I MEAN... YES SIR! AND I LET'S GO!
BRUCE WAYNE! WHAT'S OUR LITTLE HEATHER GIRL DOING WITH THE LIKES OF HIM?

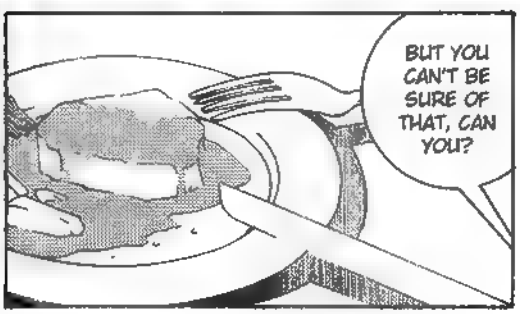
WAYNE MANOR.


YUKO, I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND MY INTENTION IN INVITING YOU TO DINNER AT MY HOME...I ATTRACT A GREAT DEAL OF MEDIA ATTENTION WHENEVER I GO OUT...
...SO I TRY TO LIMIT MY PUBLIC APPEARANCES TO THOSE EVENTS THAT BENEFIT THE WAYNE FOUNDATION'S VARIOUS CHARITABLE CONCERNS...
I UNDERSTAND COMPLETELY, BRUCE. UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ONE OF THOSE MEDIA HOUNDS...
BUT THIS WAY OF MEETING YOU IS FAR MORE RELAXING, DON'T YOU THINK?

AND MORE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TOO. SO TELL ME, WHAT BROUGHT YOU AND YOUR CREW TO GOTHAM CITY?

WHY, BATMAN, OF COURSE--
--WE DON'T HAVE SUPER-HEROES IN JAPAN...

I DON'T BELIEVE BATMAN CONSIDERS HIMSELF A "SUPER-HERO"...


BUT YOU CAN'T BE SURE OF THAT, CAN YOU?

NO... I SUPPOSE IT'S POSSIBLE HE DOES... HE'S CERTAINLY ONE OF GOTHAM CITY'S MORE PROMINENT RESIDENTS... BUT I'D GUESS HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF NOTHING MORE THAN A SLIGHTLY UNORTHODOX PUBLIC SERVANT...
JUST A POLICEMAN WITH A UNIQUE UNIFORM?
THAT'S AN INTERESTING WAY TO PUT IT...
...BUT THEN JOURNALISTS HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS, IN ANY LANGUAGE.
YOU KNOW, COMMISSIONER GORDON HAS BEEN HIGHLY UNCOOPERATIVE WITH US...
MY THEORY IS HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE EMBARRASSED BY OUR COVERAGE.
WHY WOULD HE BE EMBAR-RASSED?
IT WOULD SEEM HE'S TURNED RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC SAFETY OVER TO THE CITY'S ONE MASKED CRIMEFIGHTER!
I DOUBT BATMAN WOULD SEE IT THAT WAY...
PERHAPS... IF ONLY I COULD ASK HIM...
THERE ARE RUMORS YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER, BRUCE...
THE CONFUSION COULD EASILY BE CLEARED UP WITH AN INTERVIEW...

YUKIO, I'M GETTING A STRANGE FEELING YOU HAD AN ULTERIOR MOTIVE WHEN YOU AGREED TO THIS DINNER...
YOU'RE DEDICATED TO YOUR WORK : I RESPECT THAT BUT WHEN YOU MIX BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE--
YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE BRUCE PLEASE FORGIVE ME--
--BUT THIS IS ONE OF THOSE RARE TIMES WHEN TWO DREAMS CONVERGE...
MY FIRST NETWORK ASSIGNMENT AND A STORY ABOUT A REAL HERO! A MODERN DAY KNIGHT
IT SOUNDS LIKE THAT STORY'S ALREADY WRITTEN IN YOUR MIND YOU MIGHT NEED SOME FACTS TO BACK IT UP
YOU'RE RIGHT AGAIN. I'M SOUNDING LIKE A CUB REPORTER FOR SOME BATMAN FAN-CLUB NEWSLETTER
RECOGNIZING THAT IS A GOOD FIRST STEP

...THE SECOND STEP IS TO BEGIN THINKING AND ACTING LIKE A REPORTER. THERE'S NO ROOM FOR DREAMS IN THAT WORLD, YUKO. JUST COLD, HARD, EVEN DEADLY REALITY...
ARE YOU A DREAMER, YUKO-- OR DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?
I-I THINK I DO, BRUCE...
I--
OH!

IT-IT'S MAGNIFICENT...
FUNNY... WE HERE IN GOTHAM ALMOST TAKE IT FOR GRANTED..
BRUCE--I DON'T MEAN TO ADD INSULT TO INJURY... BUT I MUST GO!
I UNDER-STAND...
YOUR JOB COMES FIRST. THAT'S TRUE FOR MANY PEOPLE.
BRUCE...
YES, YUKO?
I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE ME, AND THAT WE CAN...PICK THIS BACK UP, WHERE WE LEFT OFF...

BUT YOU SEE. I WAS RIGHT-- THAT'S COMMISSIONER GORDON'S WAY OF CALLING FOR HELP AN ENTIRE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT DEPENDENT ON ONE MAN.
HOW TERRIBLE HOW WONDERFUL.
GO, YUKO-- THE BAT SIGNAL'S CALLING
ALFRED!
YES, MASTER BRUCE?
TAKE MS. YAGI TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME... WHATEVER, WHEREVER THIS CRIME HAPPENS TO BE SHE'S A REPORTER
BRUCE... THANK YOU.
BUT CAREFUL, YUKO..
IN GOTHAM, DREAMS DIE UGLY DEATHS..
AND REALITY CAN KILL.

BOB

BATMAN, GUESS WHAT CLOWN IS STAGING A PIECE OF PERFORMANCE ART IN GOTHAM PARK...ATOP WHAT APPEARS TO BE A PILE OF PILLS!

DON'T LET YOUR MEN NEAR HIM, COMMISSIONER-- LET HIM RANT...

BRRRRRR

I'LL BE THERE FOR HIS BIG FINISH...

HA HA HAHAHA HAHAHA HA HA!
I AM PLEASED TO SEE A CROWD OF CITIZENS HAS GATHERED FOR MY PERFORMANCE! I PROMISE YOU ENTERTAINMENT BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS-- AND ABSOLUTELY FREE!
HOW CAN I AFFORD TO DISPENSE SO MUCH JOY WITHOUT RECOMPENSE? SIMPLE! MY GOOD FRIENDS- VOLUME VOLUME VOLUME!
LIFE IS SO DREARY SO DRAB DISHWATER DULL. FOR DRONES SUCH AS YOURSELVES BUT LOOK AT ME! I AM FABULOUS-- LARGER THAN LIFE!
MY LIFE IS A CABARET MY FRIENDS AND SO SOON YOURS WILL BE TOO ALIVE BY MY MAGNIFICENT MUNIFICENCE
IT'S FREE SAMPLE NIGHT HERE AT THE PARK GOTHAMITES! I PERCH UPON A HILL OF DREAMS MY CHILDREN!
A MOUND OF HAPPINESS IN CONVENIENT CAPSULES

GOT HERE AS FAST AS I COULD
DUST OF AN ANGEL'S WINGS
WHATEVER YOU CAN IMAGINE— YOU CAN BE!
A GIANT MARE OF THE LEGEND SAID TO BE REAL? WOW
REAL OR NOT, WE'RE ABOUT SOME INCREDIBLE POWER... THE WHOLE DAMN ROGUES GALLERY—
I SEE SOME FAIRY CREATURES AMONG YOU— BUT A FEW GIRLS TOO...
YOU ARE NOT INVITED TO MY PARTY— STEP BACK OR I'LL DETONATE THE BOMB BENEATH THIS BRIDGE!

THAT CAN'T BE MY SHADOW!
AND YET, IN A WAY IT IS.
BATMAN! STERN PARENT TO MY NAUGHTY CHILD...
REALLY, OLD FRIEND, I DON'T MEAN TO BE... A PILL!
ARE WE OLD "FRIENDS"?
PUNCH!!

ARE YOU THE ORIGINAL ARTIST OR ANOTHER COUNTERFEIT?
WHAT A STRANGE THING IS A MAN WEARING A MASK TO DISCOVER THE IDENTITY OF ANOTHER MAN... HIDING SOUL.
YOU'VE NEVER DEAL' DRUGS BEFORE JOKER
BU' EVEN SO WHY GIVE THEM AWAY?
YOU ARE MAKIN' MY BATT' BUDDY' HAVEN'T YOU EVER HEARD THE OLD SAYING FIRS' ONE'S FREE?
AND HELP YOURSELF TO A HANDFUL YOU'LL SEE A PERSONALITY CHANGE MORE THAN ANYONE I KNOW

I CAN EXORCISE THIS DEMON WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE, BATMAN... I'M A SATISFIED CUSTOMER MYSELF!

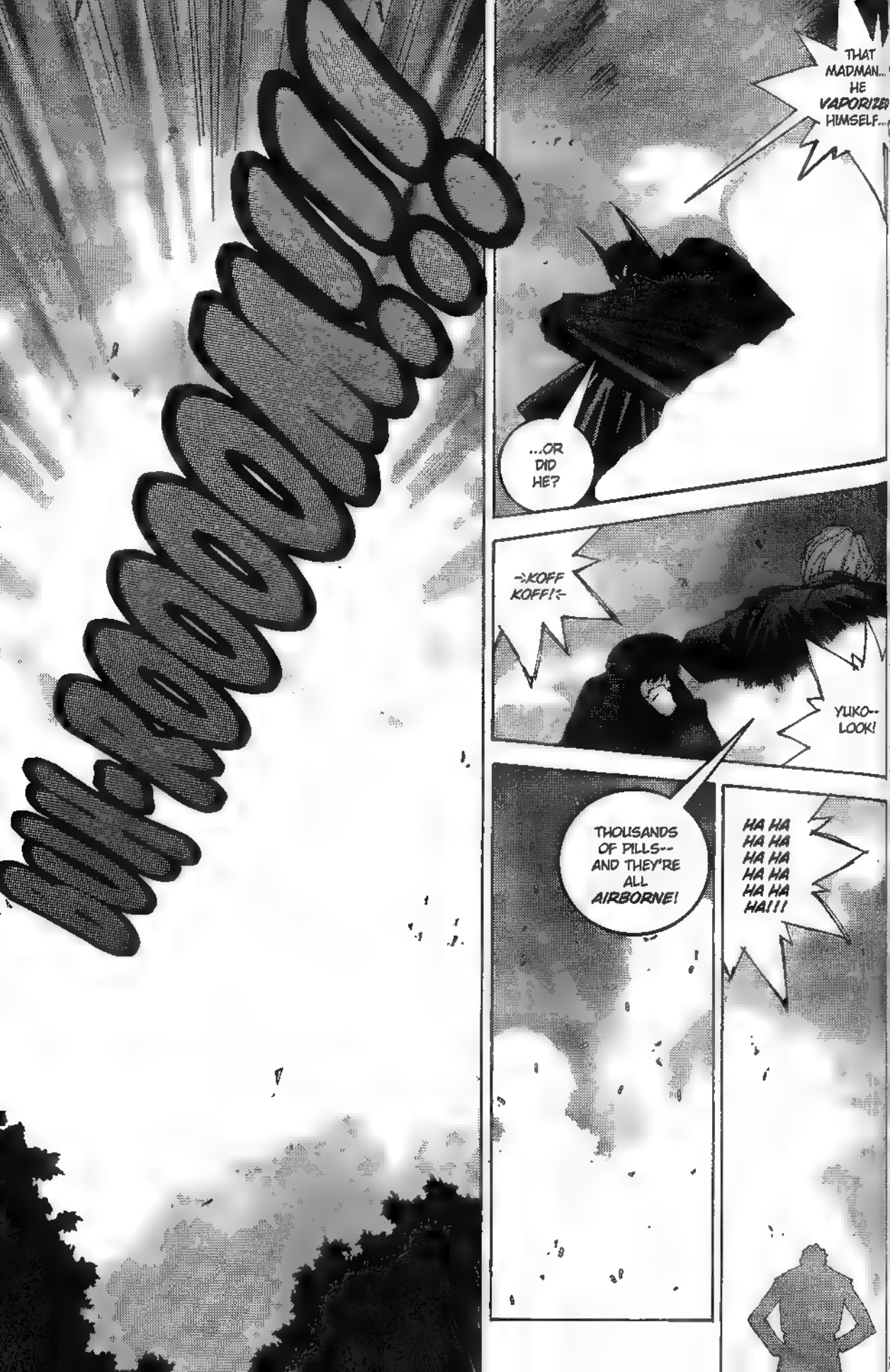
...OF COURSE, I'D'VE'D A.A. HADN'T PUT PRESSURE TO EXPERIENCE A DEMON! JUST HIT — BUT WHEN DO I FIND STAND ON SUBWAY?

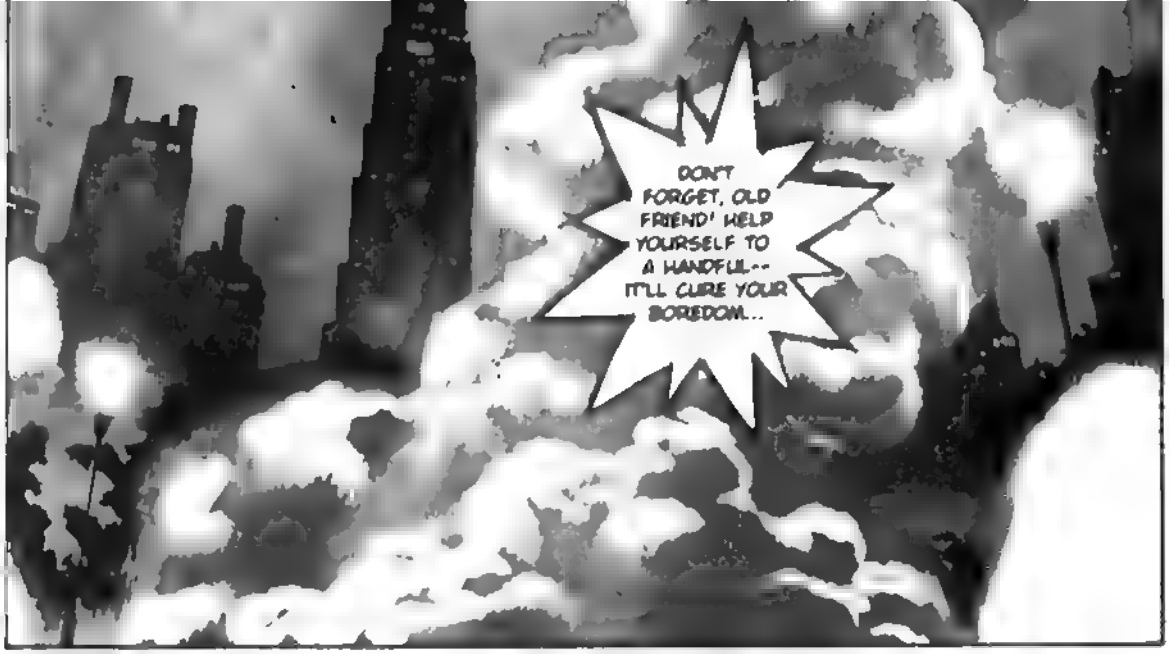
WHEREVER YOU ARE, FANATIC MARKS, YOU MORE SICK, WAITING! YOU SCREAM, FANATIC MARKS IT REALITY...

...AND IF YOU DON'T GET TO COME DOWN, JUST ONE ANOTHER, ONE ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER, AND ENJOY THE TRUTH OF EXISTENCE!

STOP SHOP— THIS SCAMP IS NOT JOKER!

YOU'RE A DETERMINED SORT--I'LL GRANT YOU THAT...
WHAHHH HPPPPP!!
POP!
I'M MAIMED! GRITTING MY TEETH IN AGONY! WHICH IS TOO BAD, IN A WAY .
..BECAUSE THE REAL DETONATOR'S IN MY JOKE TOOTH..
...GAHHHHHH...

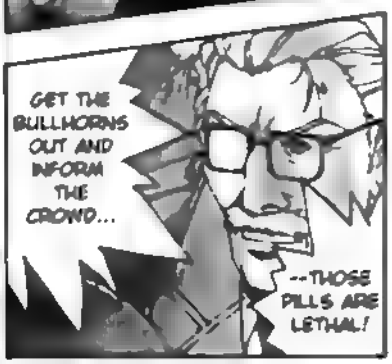

THAT MADMAN... HE VAPORIZED HIMSELF...
...OR DID HE?
-:KOFF KOFF!:-
YUKO-- LOOK!
THOUSANDS OF PILLS-- AND THEY'RE ALL AIRBORNE!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!!!


DON'T FORGET, OLD FRIEND! HELP YOURSELF TO A HANDFUL-- IT'LL CURE YOUR BOREDOM...

GONE...

EVEN FOR THE JOKER, HE WAS A PARODY OF HIMSELF..

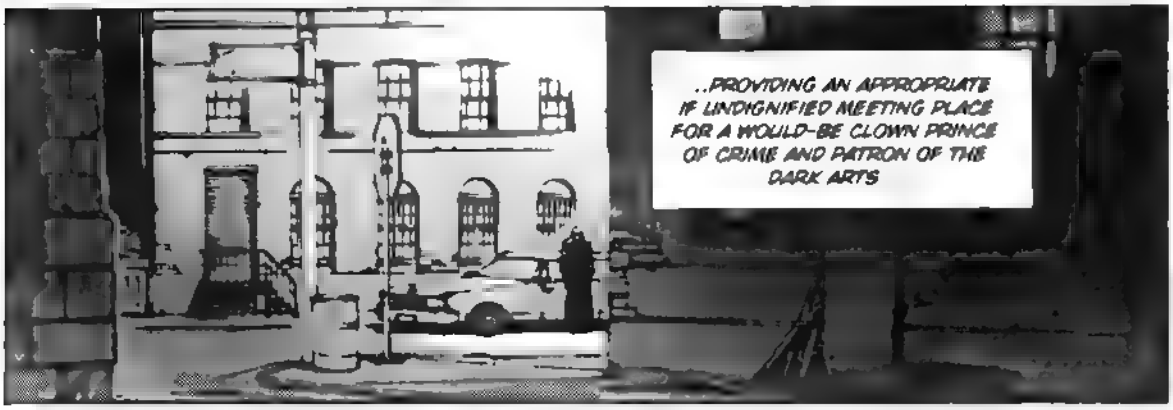
THE JOKER... ESCAPED?
BATMAN... FAILED?


GET THE BULLHORNS OUT AND INFORM THE CROWD...
--THOSE PILLS ARE LETHAL!

"FANATIC IS AS ADDICTIVE AS IT IS DANGEROUS-- THOSE FREE SAMPLES COULD IGNITE AN EPIDEMIC OF DRUG ABUSE IN GOTHAM."

"COMMISSIONER GORDON ISSUED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT ASSURING THE PUBLIC THAT AT LEAST 90% OF THE PILLS STREWN BY THE EXPLOSION WOULD BE RECOVERED.
"THE POLICE EFFORT IN GOTHAM PARK WAS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE DAY.
"AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE IN CITY GOVERNMENT HAS POINTED OUT THAT EVEN 10% OF THE PILLS DISPERSED PRESENTS A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT IN GOTHAM CITY.
"THE ILLEGAL NARCOTIC, WHOSE STREET NAME IS FANATIC, IS A HIGHLY DANGEROUS, ADDICTIVE HALLUCINOGEN.
"COMMISSIONER GORDON WOULD MAKE NO COMMENT ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE STILL-AT-LARGE SUSPECT...
"...DESPITE ARKHAM ASYLUM'S STATEMENT THAT THE JOKER REMAINS IN CUSTODY THERE, IN HIGH-SECURITY SOLITARY CONFINEMENT."

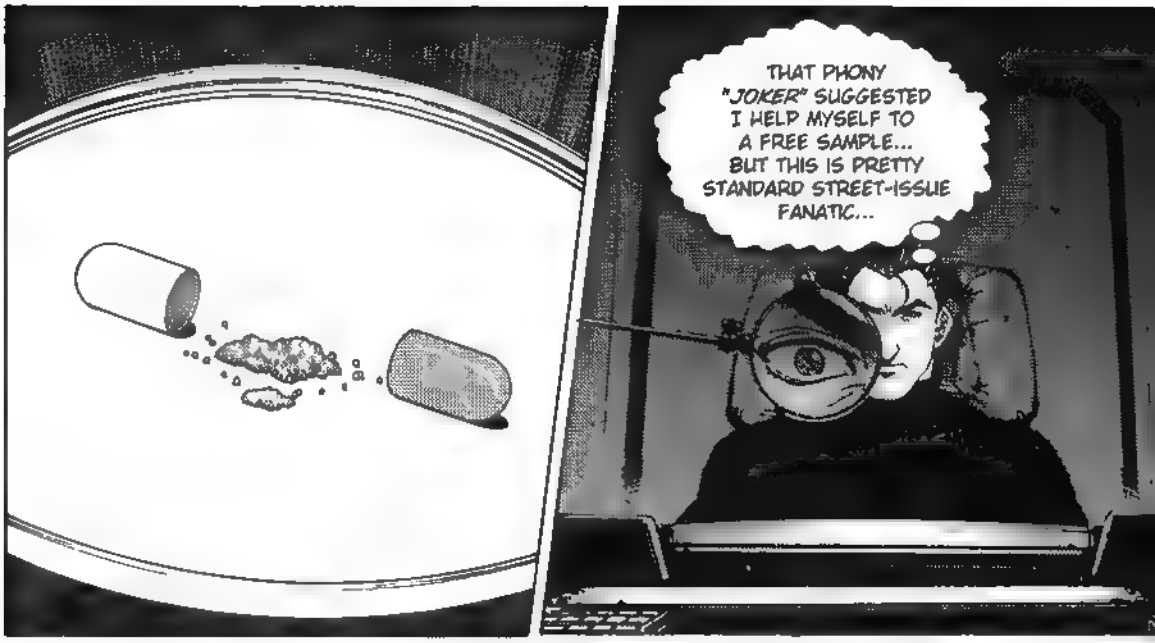
DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE POLICE AND EVEN BATMAN, THE DREARY SLUM AREA KNOWN AS CRIME ALLEY REMAINS AN UNFORTUNATE GOTHAM CITY LANDMARK...

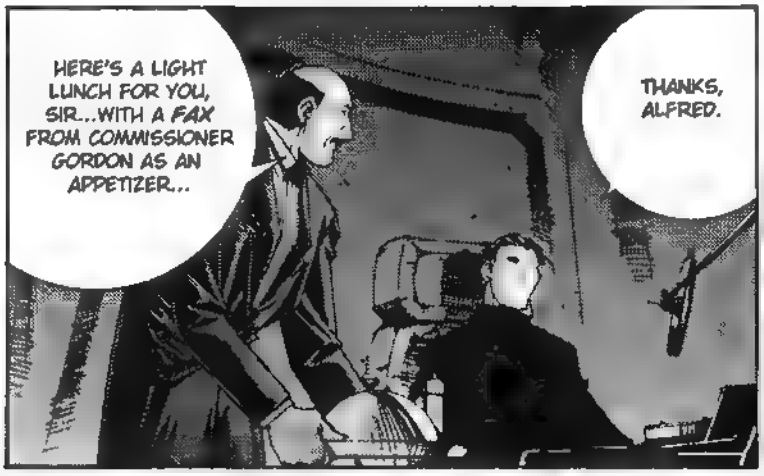

..PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATE IF UNDIGNIFIED MEETING PLACE FOR A WOULD-BE CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME AND PATRON OF THE DARK ARTS

YOU DID WELL.. NO MATTER WHAT GORDON SAYS, FREE SAMPLES OF FANATIC HAVE BEEN SPREAD ALL OVER GOTHAM. OUR SUPERIOR WILL BE PLEASED

NO MAN IS MY SUPERIOR! NOT EVEN MY GRINNING PREDECESSOR.. I WILL HAVE TO KILL HIM, YOU KNOW...
YOU'RE SURE THE FORMULA HAS BEEN PERFECTED?

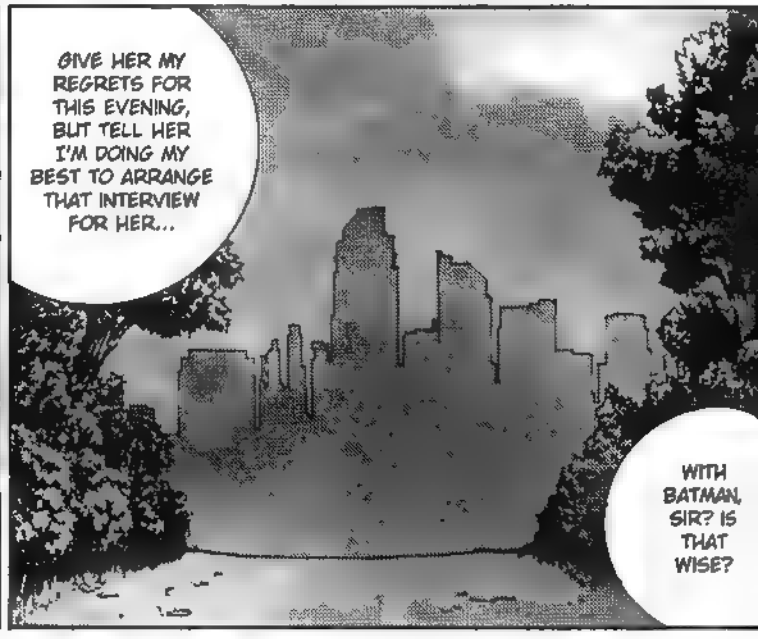
ABSOLUTELY. OUR .BENEFACTOR ASSURES ME THE UNFORTUNATE MUMMIFICATION SIDE EFFECT HAS BEEN ELIMINATED...
AS FOR KILLING THE OTHER JOKER, FIRST THINGS FIRST YOU HAVE A BAT TO TRAP.. AND HERE IS THE CHEESE .


THAT PHONY "JOKER" SUGGESTED I HELP MYSELF TO A FREE SAMPLE... BUT THIS IS PRETTY STANDARD STREET-ISSUE FANATIC...


HERE'S A LIGHT LUNCH FOR YOU, SIR...WITH A FAX FROM COMMISSIONER GORDON AS AN APPETIZER...
THANKS, ALFRED.

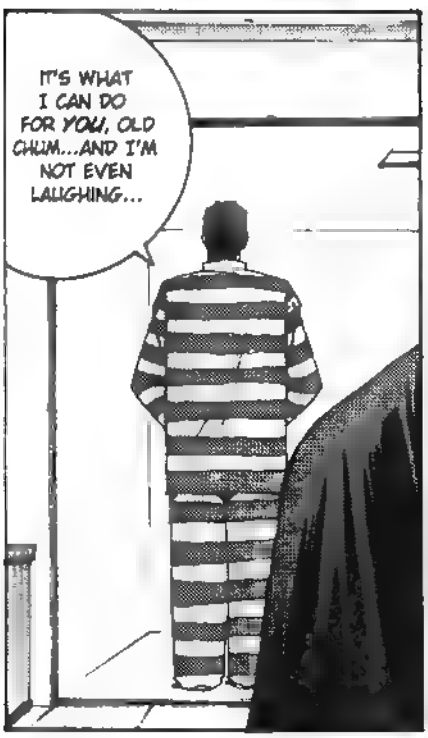
WELL, NOW THAT'S AN INTERESTING WRINKLE..
YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHO WANTS TO TALK TO ME...

ALFRED, CALL MS. YAGI.
YES SIR?

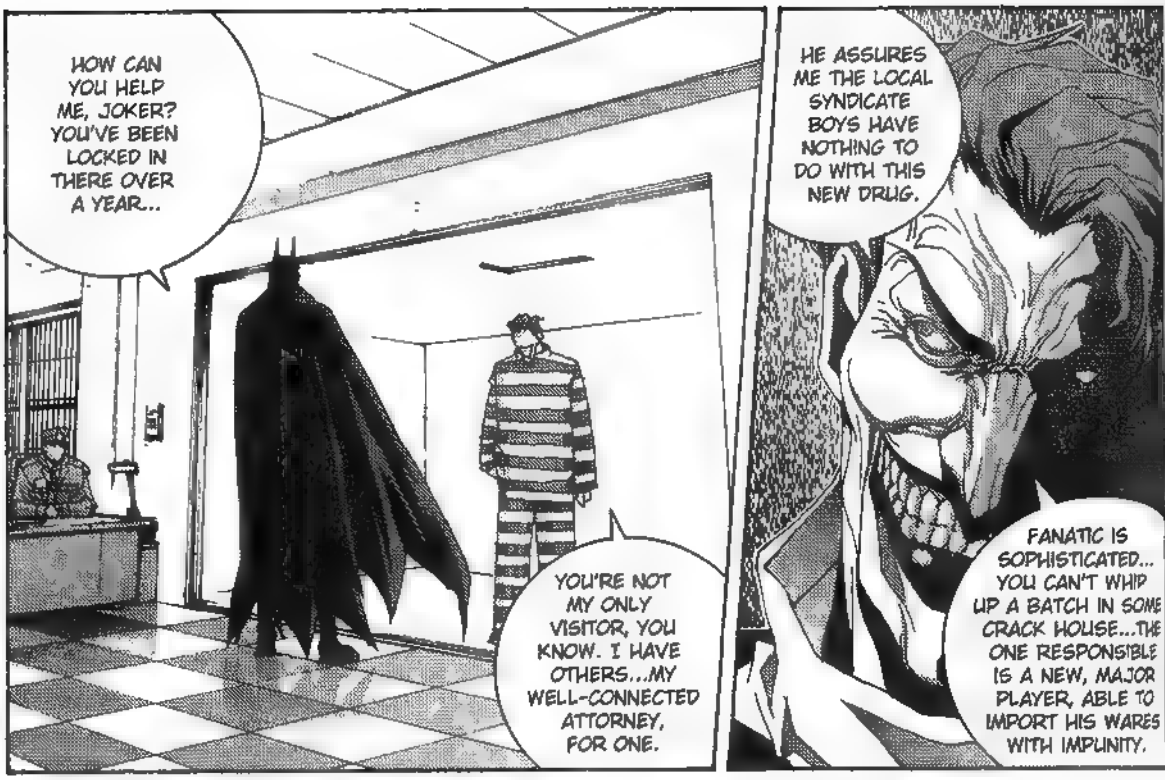

GIVE HER MY REGRETS FOR THIS EVENING, BUT TELL HER I'M DOING MY BEST TO ARRANGE THAT INTERVIEW FOR HER...
WITH BATMAN, SIR? IS THAT WISE?

"PERHAPS NOT, ALFRED... BUT IN A WORLD WHERE THE JOKER INVITES THE BATMAN TO ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR A VISIT, WHO CAN SAY WHAT IS WISE AND WHAT IS FOOLISH?"
IN A WAY, COMING HERE WAS THE *SMARTEST* THING YOU COULD HAVE DONE...

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, JOKER?


IT'S WHAT I CAN DO FOR *YOU*, OLD CHUM...AND I'M NOT EVEN LAUGHING...

...ALTHOUGH IT DOES AMUSE ME, PLAYING HANNIBAL LECTER TO YOUR CLARICE... YES IT'S ME: THE GENUINE ARTICLE.
THE GOTHAM CITY DECK ONLY HAS ROOM FOR ONE JOKER-- HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF SOMEONE TRAIPSED AROUND IN THAT UNION SUIT OF YOURS?


HOW CAN YOU HELP ME, JOKER? YOU'VE BEEN LOCKED IN THERE OVER A YEAR...
YOU'RE NOT MY ONLY VISITOR, YOU KNOW. I HAVE OTHERS...MY WELL-CONNECTED ATTORNEY, FOR ONE.
HE ASSURES ME THE LOCAL SYNDICATE BOYS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS NEW DRUG.
FANATIC IS SOPHISTICATED... YOU CAN'T WHIP UP A BATCH IN SOME CRACK HOUSE...THE ONE RESPONSIBLE IS A NEW, MAJOR PLAYER, ABLE TO IMPORT HIS WARES WITH IMPUNITY.

I SUSPECT THERE'S A SECOND DRUG, JOKER-- AN ADVANCED FORM OF FANATIC THAT THESE IMPOSTORS HAVE BEEN TAKING.
THE PILLS YOUR DOPPELGANGER DISPENSED LAST NIGHT WERE STRONG MEDICINE...BUT NO DIFFERENT FROM THE FANATIC ALREADY IN CIRCULATION.

DOES THAT MEAN THIS PALE IMITATION OF ME IS FATED TO DIE A MUMMY'S DEATH?!
OH, BATMAN... YOU ARE A GREAT FRIEND... I HAVEN'T HAD A GOOD LAUGH IN DAYS...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

MAYBE NOT-- HE SURVIVED LAST NIGHT AND NO NEW MUMMIES HAVE SHOWN UP AT THE MORGUE LOOKING FOR A ROOM
HOW DROLL YOU ARE SUCH A DRY WIT THEN PROMISE ME ONE THING

WISH I COULD HELP--
--SCRATCH THAT--
-GLAD I CAN'T HELP
OH, BATMAN-- HOW I'VE MISSED YOU! AND DON'T BE FOOLED BY THAT PALE IMITATION! WHEN YOU MEET THE REAL THING YOU'LL NEED ALL YOUR WIT AND WILES!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
SHOW THIS PLAGIARIST NO MERCY-- KILL HIM DEADER THAN UNCLE MILTIE!

HE TOLD ME...

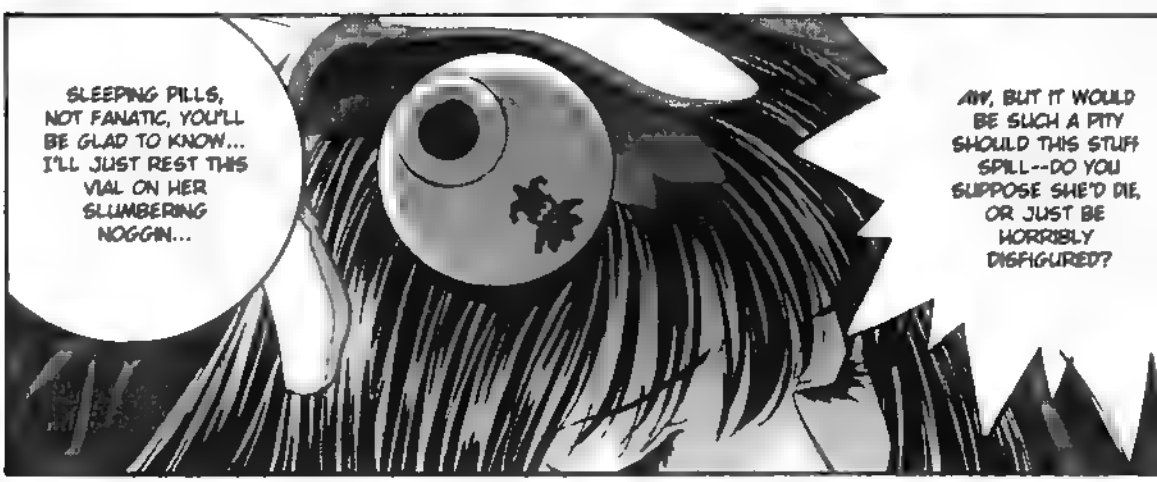
THE WATERFRONT-- WHERE THE BATMAN WAITS TO MEET WITH AN INFORMANT
IF A NEW PLAYER IS INVOLVED AS THE JOKER SUGGESTED THEN THESE DOCKS MAY WELL BE THE GATEWAY THROUGH WHICH FANATIC'S ENTERING GOTHAM CITY
IRONIC PUBLIC THINKS I'M A SUPER-HERO? YET HERE I WAIT
LIKE ANY TWO-BIT GUMSHOE COOLING MY HEELS WAITING A PUNK INFORMANT KEEPS HIS MEET HANGING MY HOPES ON THE SLENDEREST OF THREADS
HA HA HA HA HA

WELL DUMB LUCK, BUT I'LL TAKE IT
HA HA
HA HA HA

HA HA HA
creeeeeKKK
WHAMP
HA HA HA HA HA HA

I BRING REGARDS FROM SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE-- THE REAL JOKER.
OH, BUT I AM THE REAL JOKER... THE NEW AND IMPROVED JOKER!

WITH THE LATEST BREAK-THROUGHS IN CHEMICAL ADDITIVES... HA HA HA HA!
ALTHOUGH SOME TRIED-AND-TRUE CHEMICALS NEED NO IMPROVE-MENT.
PLIP!
...LIKE SULFURIC ACID!
SSSSSSSS
KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, BATMAN! OR THIS GIRL DIES!
THAT'S RIGHT-- SHE JUST LOOKS DEAD-- ACTUALLY SHE'S OUT COLD!


SLEEPING PILLS, NOT FANATIC, YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW... I'LL JUST REST THIS VIAL ON HER SLUMBERING NOGGIN...
AW, BUT IT WOULD BE SUCH A PITY SHOULD THIS STUFF SPILL--DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE'D DIE, OR JUST BE HORRIBLY DISFIGURED?

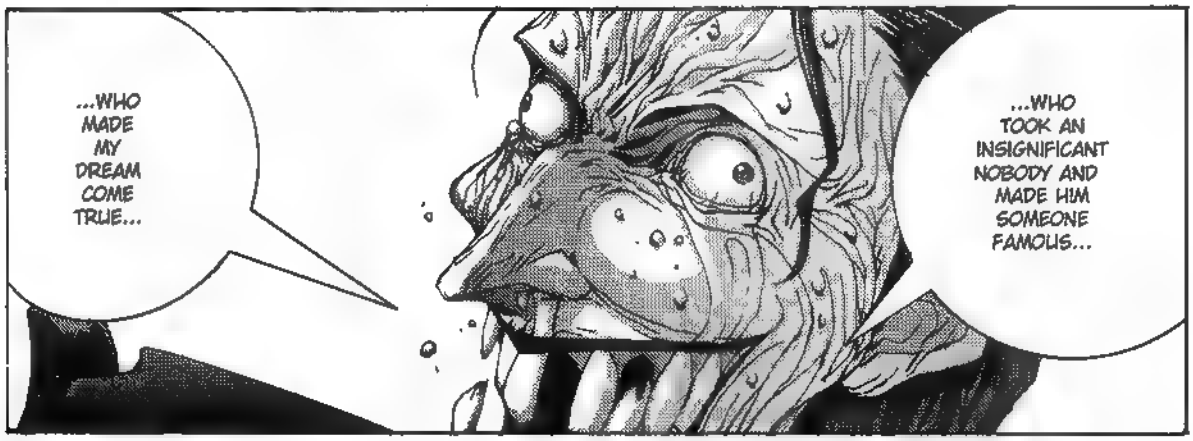
YOU KNOW I COULD HAVE KILLED YOU LAST NIGHT... OR BOOBY-TRAPPED THIS BOAT... KNOW WHY I DIDN'T?
BECAUSE YOU LIKE TO PLAY GAMES? BECAUSE YOU'RE AN INSANE CHILD?
YOU RAISE VALID POINTS, YES YOU DO... BUT NO, IT'S BECAUSE I WANT SOMETHING...
I'M LISTENING-- IF IT'S A REASONABLE TRADE, I'LL CONSIDER IT...
...FOR THE REPORTER'S LIFE.
I DON'T NEED MUCH... A RAG, A BONE, A HANK OF HAIR...
YOU SEE, A CLEAN KILL WOULD BE BEST, THOUGH I WILL BLOW YOU AND THIS SHIP UP, IF NEED BE.
THE MAN YOU DREAM OF BEING WANTS ME TO KILL YOU...AND I'M BEGINNING TO THINK I JUST MIGHT.
THE EX-JOKER DOESN'T UNDERSTAND! I'M HIM NOW! I'M MORE HIM THAN HE EVER WAS-- HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE!

I ENJOY THESE LITTLE GAMES-- SO WE WON'T MAKE THIS OUR FINAL SHOWDOWN.
...IF YOU JUST TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES!
I'M NOT MAKING A PASS, DEAR BOY-- I'M NOT EVEN INTERESTED IN THAT KIND OF FUN!
MY CLOTHES. FOR THE WOMAN. STRAIGHT TRADE?
YES! EVEN DEAL!
HEY!
shhoooopp!!
ALL RIGHT-- MY BELT FIRST...
IT HURTS! THAT'S NOT FUNNY.
WHAK
ZZZZZZZS
YOU CHEATED, BATMAN! YOU CHEATED!

SIZZALL
YOU BURNED ME! MY EAR HURTS!... YOU'RE NO FUN AT ALL...
I CAN BE.
YANNNNK
TIME TO STOP LAUGHING, FUNNYMAN.
ACTUALLY... I...I... THINK YOU'RE... RIGHT...
I FEEL STRANGE... IT'S NOT JUST... THE ACID...
...I'M... BURNING UP...NO JOKE...
I NEVER DREAMED IT WOULD HURT SO MUCH...
...BUT I CAN'T... CAN'T STOP SMILING...

DO YOU NEED A FIX? A FANATIC FIX?
NO NO IT'S NOT THAT KIND OF DRUG
YOU NEED ONLY ONLY ONE DOSE
I'M DYING MEE MEE MEE
THE BOAT
WE'RE MOVING !
"SOMEONE'S PILOTING THE YACHT BY REMOTE CONTROL."
WHO IS IT, "JOKER?" WHO'S TAKEN OVER?

YOU CALLED ME "JOKER"! YOU ACKNOWLEDGE ME!
I HAVE ARRIVED... I AM HIM... ME...
YOU ARE DYING... DECOMPOSING... YOU'LL BE ANOTHER MUMMY IN MINUTES... WHO DID THIS?
WHO POISONED YOU, "JOKER"? AND WHO'S TAKEN CONTROL OF THIS SHIP?
THE ONE WHO GAVE ME THIS PRECIOUS GIFT, BATMAN...
THE SAME KIND MAN...


...WHO MADE MY DREAM COME TRUE...
...WHO TOOK AN INSIGNIFICANT NOBODY AND MADE HIM SOMEONE FAMOUS...

HE DIDN'T DO YOU ANY FAVORS, "JOKER"--
HE'S KILLING YOU...
THEN I GUESS THE JOKE'S ON ME...

TALK TO ME, "JOKER"--YOUR "BENEFACTOR" HAS KILLED YOU. YOU HAVE NO WAY TO KNOW HE'LL KEEP HIS BARGAIN.
HE WILL. HE WILL. HE'S A GENIUS. A GREAT MAN, BATMAN! HE MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE!
"JOKER!"
I-- I'M HAPPY NOW
CAN'T YOU CAN'T YOU SEE ME
heh heh heh
SMILE?
FOOL. YOU POOR FOOL.
HEHHHHH

DEAD

WHO ARE YOU?

I AM YOUR BIGGEST FAN!

WHAT THE—?

BUT I HAVE TO WONDER...

...CAN EVEN THE BATMAN ESCAPE THIS DEATH TRAP?!

BATMAN DRAGS THE UNCONSCIOUS YUKO TOPSIDE WHERE
I ONLY GET ONE SHOT...
...BETTER MAKE IT COUNT.
WSHHHHH!
CHAK!
CHOK!
WHAM!
RRRR

BOOO

KA-WHOOOOOOM!!!

THE EXPLOSION ECHOES ACROSS GOTHAM, LIKE THUNDER...

...BUT THE CITY'S GREAT BRIDGE STILL STANDS...

...AS DOES THE DARK KNIGHT WHO GUARDS THAT CITY...

IS SHE A VICTIM... OR THE *KEY* TO THIS PUZZLE...?

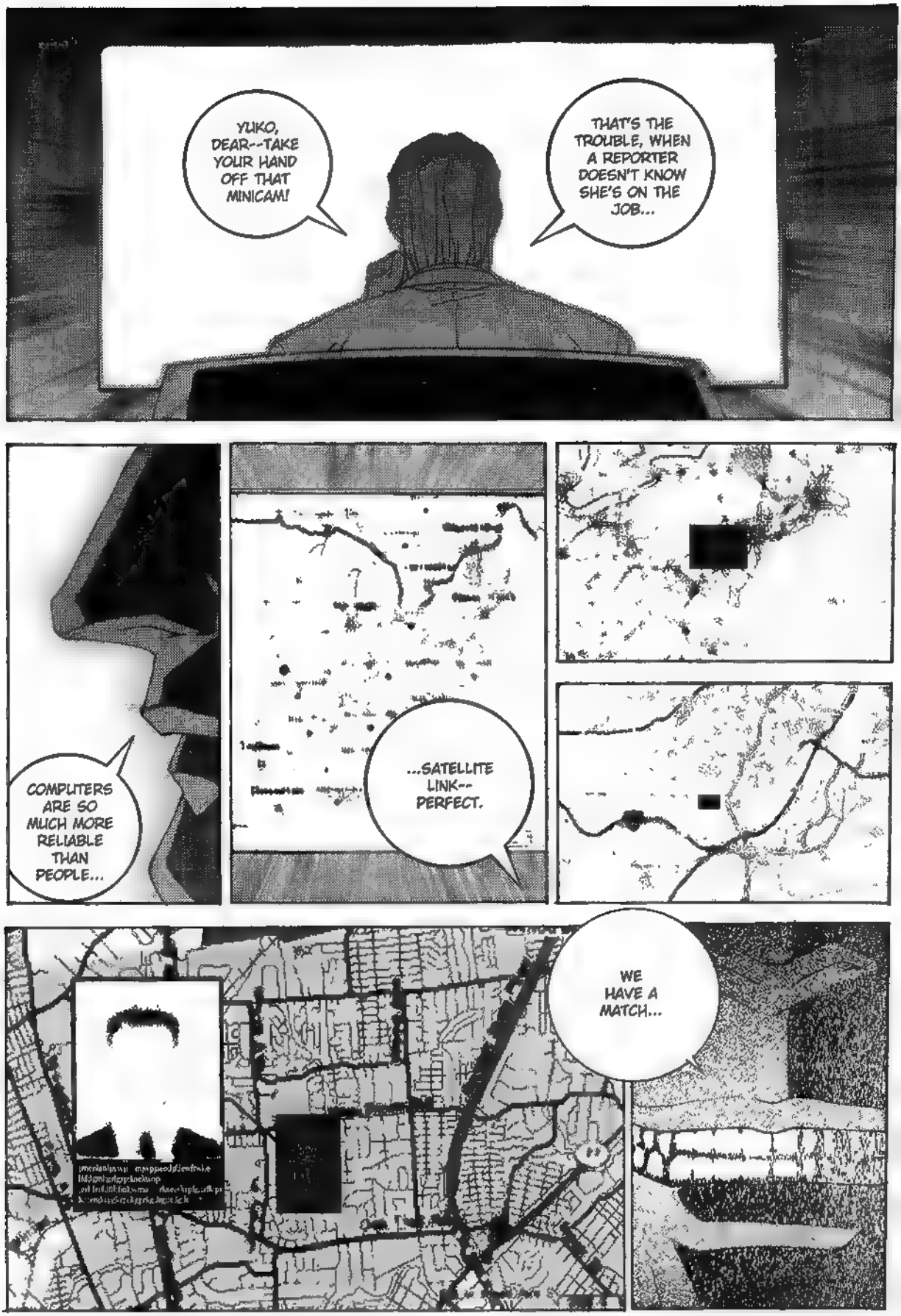
I'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH...

MY GOD IT'S HIS HEADQUARTERS- THE BATCAVE!
IF ANYONE ELSE WAS EVER INSIDE THEY NEVER BREATHED A WORD TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD
I JUST MIGHT BE THE FIRST

AT LEAST, THE FIRST TO BRING BACK PHOTOS
KLIK!
KLIK!
YOUR CAMERA WAS DAMAGED, I'M AFRAID

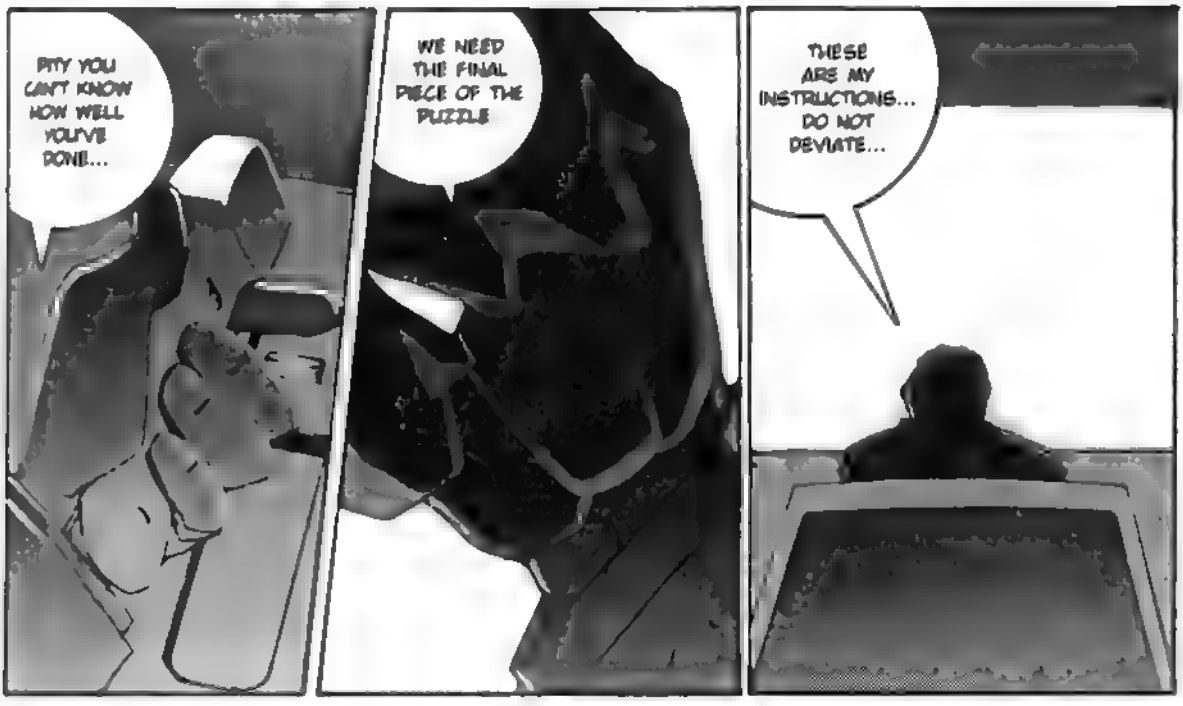
I'D OFFER TO SHOW YOU AROUND, BUT YOU SEEM TO BE DOING FINE YOURSELF

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE NONE THE WORSE FOR WEAR, AFTER THAT WOULD-BE JOKER TOOK YOU HOSTAGE.
WHO DID WHAT...? I'M... I'M SORRY...
...BUT ALL I REMEMBER IS BRUCE WAYNE'S DRIVER OFFERING ME COFFEE WHILE WE WAITED AT THE WATER-FRONT...
I DRANK A BIT, AND THEN... I MUST HAVE PASSED OUT.
YOU SLEPT THROUGH A DANGEROUS ADVENTURE, MS. YAGI...I'LL FILL YOU IN ON THE WAY BACK TO YOUR HOTEL.
BATMAN... PLEASE... WOULD YOU GRANT ME THAT INTERVIEW...?
YOU'RE KIDNAPPED BY A MADMAN, ALMOST BLOWN UP IN A BOAT, AND ALL YOU CAN THINK ABOUT IS YOUR PRECIOUS STORY?
I WAS ALMOST BLOWN UP?
THERE ARE OTHER THINGS MORE IMPORTANT... LIKE YOUR *LIFE.*
JOURNALISM IS MY LIFE.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT...
I'VE BEEN RECKLESS. THANK YOU... FOR MY LIFE.

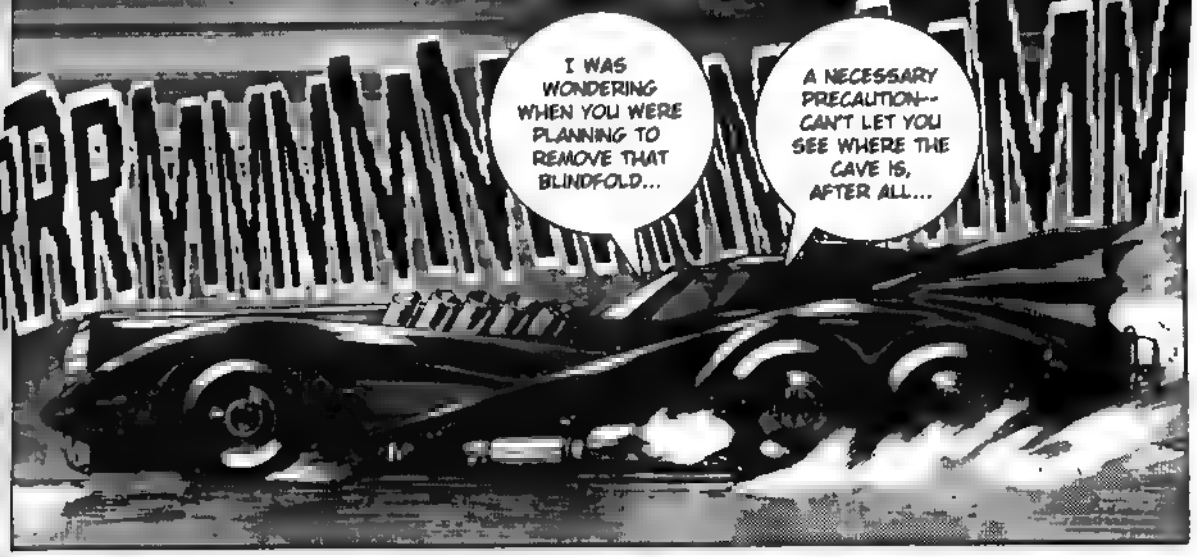

YUKO, DEAR--TAKE YOUR HAND OFF THAT MINICAM!
THAT'S THE TROUBLE, WHEN A REPORTER DOESN'T KNOW SHE'S ON THE JOB...
COMPUTERS ARE SO MUCH MORE RELIABLE THAN PEOPLE...
...SATELLITE LINK-- PERFECT.
WE HAVE A MATCH...

BRUCE WAYNE
...AND IT'S A GOOD ONE.

YUKO... AH YUKO.


PITY YOU CAN'T KNOW HOW WELL YOU'VE DONE...
WE NEED THE FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE
THESE ARE MY INSTRUCTIONS... DO NOT DEVIATE...

SO YOU UNDERSTAND MY LOYALTY NOW?
I DO, SIR.
ABSOLUTELY.
IT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN BUILDING TOWARD. I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.
OF COURSE.
KLIKK


RRMMM

...IT SURGES... THE POWER...
...THE POWER OF THE BAT!
I AM THE BATMAN!

THE MOTIVES OF THESE VILLAINS HAVE BEEN PROFITLESS, BATMAN...
...AND IT IS AS IF THEY WERE PARODIES OF THEIR ORIGINALS...
WITH ONE EXCEPTION--THE BOGUS JOKER SCATTERED SAMPLES OF FANATIC ACROSS THE CITY, REMEMBER.
THIS LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THE MASTERMIND BEHIND ALL OF THIS HAS A CONNECTION TO ILLEGAL NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING.
AND, OF COURSE, THE CORONER'S EXAMINATION OF THE MUMMIES REVEALED FANATIC IN THEIR SYSTEMS...
BUT FANATIC, HOWEVER POWERFUL A HALLUCINOGEN, HARDLY TRANSFORMS A HUMAN BEING SO COMPLETELY...
...NO KNOWN DRUG CAN PRODUCE SO RADICAL A PHYSICAL CHANGE...
PERHAPS A STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD-- THE LENS ON MY MINICAM IS BROKEN, BUT THE AUDIO STILL WORKS...
TURN IT OFF.
PLEASE.
UH... CERTAINLY.
THANK YOU.
MS. YAGI, I BELIEVE ANOTHER DRUG IS INVOLVED...

SOMEHOW, MS. YAGI, THIS IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST BUSINESS, WELL BEYOND NARCOTICS SMUGGLING, EVEN MORE THAN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POWERFUL NEW DRUG...
...THE MAN WHOSE VOICE I HEARD ON THE YACHT WAS OBSESSED WITH ME...
THE MEDIA INTERESTS YOU PURSUE, MS. YAGI, DEMONSTRATES AN UNFORTUNATE ASPECT OF MY WAR ON CRIME...
...I HAVE BECOME A KIND OF MEDIA FIGURE MYSELF.
LOVED, HATED... FIXATED UPON.
BEFORE YOU DISMISS ME AS AN EGOMANIAC, MS. YAGI, CONSIDER:
"THIS SCIENTIFIC GENIUS PRESUMABLY COULD HAVE REPLICATED ANYONE ON THE PLANET...
"...YET HE CHOSE... THE JOKER?"
HE USES A MIRACLE BREAKTHROUGH DRUG TO SEND MY ROGUES GALLERY AFTER ME... WHY?
I TAKE THIS MADMAN AT HIS WORD, MS. YAGI... ON THE YACHT HE SAID HE WAS MY BIGGEST FAN--
BATMAN! STANDING IN THE ROAD...!!

SKRRR

HIS FEATURES... THEY'RE NOT MY FEATURES...
...SO HE'S NOT ANOTHER DRUG-INDUCED DOPPEL-GANGER.
BUT IS HE ANYTHING MORE THAN JUST A MAN PRETENDING TO BE ME?
IT WAS DIFFICULT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO BEAT COPIES OF HIS ENEMIES...CAN HE BEAT A COPY OF HIMSELF?

I WONDER... IF HE HAS HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH BATTLE WITH BE CHARGED BY "PHOENIX PARK"
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...

I DON'T KNOW! YOU'D HAVE TO TELL ME WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE, STRANGER...
AND ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS: THAT YOU'RE SERIOUSLY MORE...

...OR THEY WILL BE! TOWERING MEN WITH GUNS AT THEIR BACK! THEIRS IS THE FUTURE I
AGAIN! ...IF HE CAN PULL OUT AHEAD

SHRAKK!
IS THAT ALL YOU HAVE?
KRAKK!
IN THE END, I THINK IT IS A.. IT.. NEED
AS FOR YOU... YOU RIPPED MY CAPE

YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY FOR THAT
COLLECT THEM
WHEN THEY FACE OFF LIKE THAT EVEN I CAN'T TELL THEM APART!
WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?
BATMAN WORKS FOR NO ONE— HE IS THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPION.
YOU WOULD ALREADY KNOW THAT IF YOU WERE BATMAN—

--BUT I'M BATMAN NOW!!
KREEE...
MY GOD, HE'S POWERFUL! GOT TO KEEP--
--OUT OF THE WAY--
--OF THOSE BLADES
SHRIK
Whoosh!
Shunkk
Whomp
--AND KEEP HIM FLAT ON HIS BACK!

WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?
"I FEEL SO HELPLESS...
"SITTING HERE IN THE BATMOBILE WHILE THEY FIGHT...
"WATCHING THE TWO IN *MORTAL COMBAT*...
"I KNOW THE *TRUE* BATMAN HAS SWORN NEVER TO KILL...
"BUT THE *OTHER*...
"THE ONE WITH THE BROKEN EAR...
THIS LITTLE GAME IS JUST ABOUT *OVER*...
"I DO NOT THINK *HE* HAS ANY SUCH RESERVATIONS!"

!!
IT'S TIME YOU GOT A REAL TASTE OF MY POWER!
WHU
DD!
SHOOOOOOO
UNGHH...
AIEEEE!!!

HE'S PUMPED FULL OF SOMETHING... MAYBE NOT WHAT THE OTHER IMPOSTORS TOOK...
...BUT HIS STRENGTH IS BEYOND ANY REASONABLE HUMAN LEVELS...
DON'T THINK I CAN TAKE ANOTHER ROUND OF HIS ABUSE...
BUT THEN, I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE...
LET'S DO IT...
SO GRACEFUL AS HE ALIGHTS... THE BATMAN.
LET'S.

THEY SAY EACH MAN IS HIS OWN WORST ENEMY...AND I AM YOU, BATMAN...BUT YOUNGER...

...STRONGER...

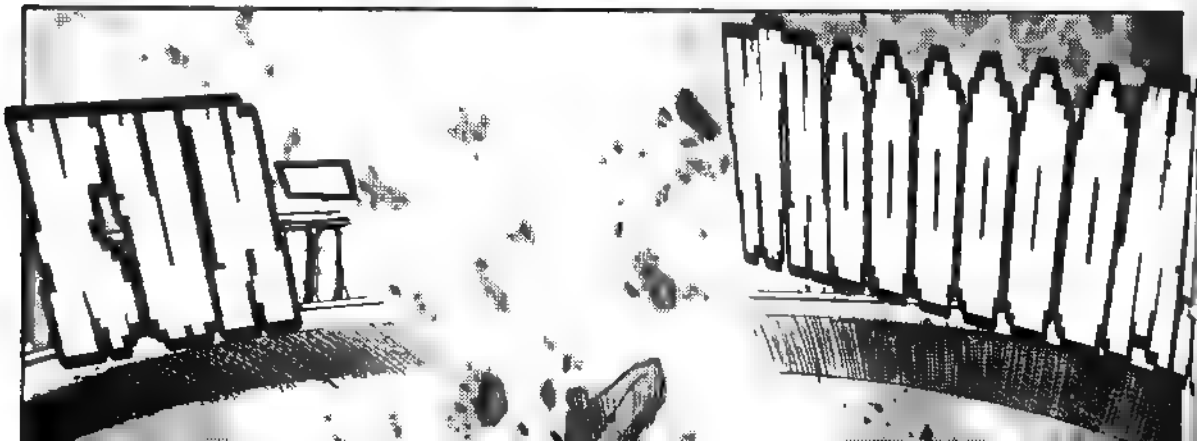
...AND OUT FOR ***BLOOD.***

THIS IS EVERYTHING TELEVISION SHOULD BE! ENTERTAINING, YES...

...BUT ALSO INFORMATIVE.
WHAK!!!
UHH!!
LOSE YOUR BALANCE, OLD MAN?
LET ME HELP...
MY GIFTED IMPOSTOR'S COWL-MOUNTED SENSORS ARE RECORDING SUCH DELICIOUS DATA...

WHA--?
I SEE YOU STILL HAVE ENOUGH STRENGTH-- TO RUN AWAY!
BUT NOT FROM ME, BATMAN...

COULD MY BATMAN BE BETTER THAN THE REAL THING?
...NOT FROM YOUR-SELF!
fssshhhhhhhh


KUN
WHOOOOOM

BATMAN IS DEAD .. LONG LIVE BATM--
--EH? WHAT'S THIS?
A GRAPPLING HOOK..
BUT. THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
I BEG TO DIFFER..
YOU'RE... YOU'RE NOT HUMAN!
GOTHAM CEMETERY IS JUST OVER THAT RISE...
LET'S FINISH IT THERE-- THE LOSER WILL BE HOME

AND SO, WHILE GOTHAM SLEEPS...

...ITS PROTECTOR FIGHTS FOR ITS SURVIVAL IN A CITY OF THE DEAD...

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE...

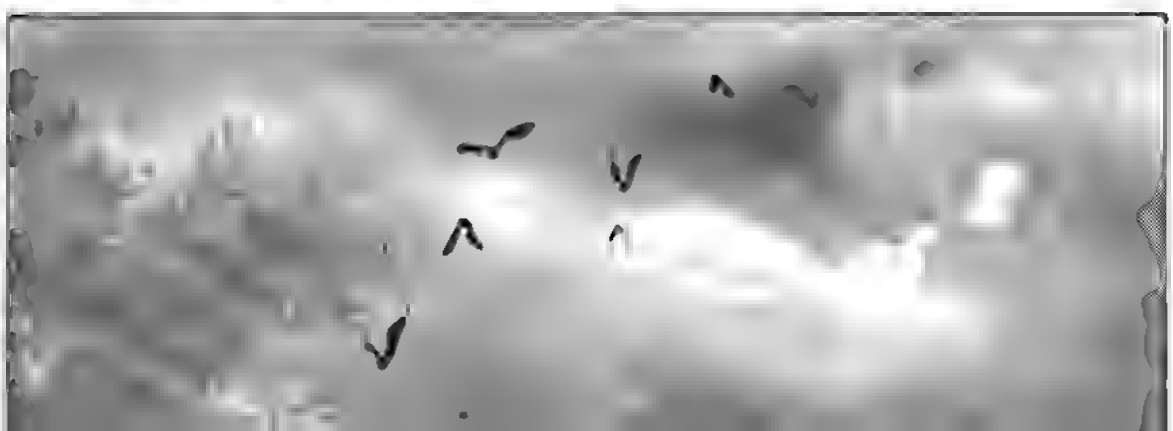
OF COURSE YOU DO!

I AM THE FUTURE!

SHRAKK!

YOUR TIME, YOUR WAYS ARE THINGS OF THE PAST!
YOU SQUANDER YOUR POWERS PROTECTING THE WEAK!
NO MORE TALK, OLD MAN--STAND AND FIGHT!
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU *WANT*--
AT LEAST I AM THE MASTER OF MY FATE--WHILE YOU ARE A *SLAVE* TO--
AKKK!
--SO BE IT!!

WHOOSH!



WHY WOULD I BOTHER?
WHOOSH!
BOOOM!
ARGGHH!
WHAMMM!

DAMN LINE MESSED UP MY AIM-- NOW WHERE DID HE--

LOOKING FOR ME?

PRACTICE YEARS OF IT

AND NOW THAT I'VE GOT YOUR ATTENTION

YAAAAAAAAAKK!!

HOW DID YOU GET BEHIND--

YOU WON'T BE NEEDING THIS

YOU'RE RIGHT ! WON'T--

--AS LONG AS I'VE STILL GOT THESE!

THONKKK!
UHHHHNNN...
ARGHHHH!
AHAH.. HIS POWER SEEMS TO BE WAVERING
THE DRUGS HE MUST HAVE TAKEN BEFORE ATTACKING ME ARE WEARING OFF
AND SINCE HE'S BEING FUELED BY THEM, ONCE THEY'RE GONE, THE FIGHT IS OVER.
HIS SWINGS AND THRUSTS.. THEY'RE LOSING THEIR PRECISION.
HIS EFFECTIVENESS IS FADING BY THE SECOND.
ANOTHER MINUTE...
AND HE'LL HAVE BURNT HIMSELF OUT COMPLETELY

WHOM PF!!
KRAKK
BAMF
BAMF
I MAY INDEED BE OUT OF TIME--
AKKKKK!!
YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, IMPOSTOR-- YOUR BODY CAN'T TAKE THE STRAIN MUCH LONGER!
BUT IT'S TIME ENOUGH TO FINISH YOU--

KRAKK!

FOREVER--!?

KAOOM!!!

ARRGGH!!

WHO SENT YOU?

I'LL... TAKE... THAT SECRET... TO MY GRAVE.

YOU WON'T HAVE FAR TO GO.

BATMAN... IS HE DEAD?
I ASKED YOU TO STAY BACK... PLEASE...
THE DANGER'S OVER, ISN'T IT?
I'M A REPORTER, REMEMBER?
HOW COULD I FORGET?
BATMAN, IS THIS ANOTHER OF THE IMPOSTORS? WILL HE...DIE AND SHRIVEL UP LIKE A MUMMY BEFORE OUR EYES?
NO--THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT. HE'S JUST A MAN...IN A MASK AND A COSTUME HE HAD NO RIGHT TO WEAR.

I DON'T BELIEVE HE TOOK THE SAME DRUG—THE ENHANCED VERSION OF FANATIC—THAT FUELED THE OTHER IMPOSTORS
UHHHHH
BUT HE MAY HAVE BEEN IN ANOTHER VARIANT OF FANATIC OR SOME OTHER CHEMICAL COCKTAIL
THAT ELEVATED HIS STRENGTH TO SUPERHUMAN LEVELS
WHOEVER HE IS HE'S STILL ALIVE—BUT IN HIS CONDITION NOT FOR MUCH LONGER
BETWEEN OUR BATTLE AND THE DRUGS THE LIFE HAS BEEN DRAINED OUT OF HIM
WHAT'S LEFT CAN BE MEASURED IN HOURS I'M AFRAID
BUT I THINK THE MAN UNDER THE MASK WILL PROVIDE US WITH SOME ANSWERS
OR RAISE SOME NEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU
YOU KNOW WHO HE IS?
HOW CAN YOU? I LOOK DOWN AND A... I SEE A BATMAN
LOOK CLOSER

THESE FUCKING IMPOSTORS JUST APPEARED WHEN YOU AND YOUR CREW ARRIVED
AS IF SOMEONE WERE STAGING A GRAND ANTI-SCUM SHOW ESPECIALLY FOR YOUR CAMERA
WHO BETTER TO BRING ON SUCH A "SHOW"
NO
NO
—THAN A PROTAGONIST?

NAGAI!
KNOWING WHO HE WAS IS THE SIMPLE PART...
WHAT I STILL DON'T KNOW IS WHO HE'S WORKING FOR...

AHHHH!

RAKKK!

WAS I AN ANIMAL—

"AS LONG AS I BLOW MY MIND I'LL BE ALIVE."

AS YOU ALWAYS DO HAVE ME BELIEVE—

—IT'S TIME FOR ME TO TAKE MY LEAVE

THAT MANIAC— HE'S COMMITTING SUICIDE!!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
THE LAST PRESCRIPTION...
AN OVERDOSE OF LIGHT
ENOUGH TO HAVE YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED.
AND THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO DREAM A BIT OF DREAMS...
STAND BY ME...
PLEASE GO SOMEWHERE ELSE—YOU MUST HAVE BEEN A DREAMER ONCE, TO PUT UP THAT FANTASTIC CASTLE!

WHEN I
WAS A CHILD
I DREAMED OF
BEING YOU
AND FOR A MOMENT,
MY DREAMS
CAME TRUE

BATMAN.
I WAS
NOT A
PART OF
THIS.

YET
I AM
SO
SAD

AND
ASHAMED

YUKO, YOU WERE USED, AS I WAS USED, FOR SOME MASTER SHOWMAN'S PLEASURE--NAGAI, I'M AFRAID, WAS JUST ONE OF MANY PLAYERS IN ALL THIS.
W-WE WERE JUST FRIENDS, AT FIRST...
THEN, LATELY, HE'D CHANGED... BECOME SO IRRITABLE...
THE DRUGS, PROBABLY.
BUT IF NAGAI'S MADNESS WAS REALLY JUST A TWISTED ATTEMPT TO LIVE OUT A CHILDHOOD FANTASY...
...SOMEONE *ELSE* WAS BENEFITING FROM HIS PERFORMANCE...
THE AMBULANCE IS ON THE WAY. HIS FATE IS OUT OF OUR HANDS NOW, BUT E.M.S. MIGHT HAVE BETTER LUCK REVIVING HIM...
YES...

WEEEOOO
WEEEOOOO
WEEEOOOO
IF THERE'S ANY WAY FOR HIM TO SURVIVE, THE PARAMEDICS WILL FIND IT..
...AND THEN MAYBE WE'LL FINALLY HAVE SOME OF OUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED
NAGAI WAS AN AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST .. RESPECTED, HIS INTEGRITY UNQUESTIONED
HOW COULD HE DO SUCH A THING?
LEAVE DISCOVERING THAT TO ME FOR NOW, COMMISSIONER GORDON WILL ESCORT YOU BACK TO YOUR HOTEL..
IF YOU DON'T MIND--
OF COURSE...
YUKI!

...YES?
I HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF FINDING THE MAN BEHIND THESE INCIDENTS. AND AFTER I DO...
...WE'LL FINISH UP OUR INTERVIEW.
THANK YOU... BATMAN.
I-I'LL LOOK FORWARD TO THAT...

BUT I SUSPECT I'LL BE SEEING MS. YAGI AGAIN BEFORE THIS CASE IS SOLVED...
IN SOME WAY I HAVE YET TO FIGURE OUT, SHE'S AT THE *HEART* OF IT...
"...AND I'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO STICK CLOSE TO THAT HEART... WHEREVER IT MAY TAKE ME .."

PULL OVER HERE.
HOW'S THE PULSE?
WEAK. YOU WORRIED?
NAH. JUST DON'T WANT HIM TO JUMP BACK TO LIFE ONCE WE START WORKING.
MIGHT AS WELL SHUT HIM DOWN FIRST, RIGHT?
AHHH... THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG. TWENTY SECONDS, AND IT'S LIGHTS OUT FOR NAGA!
NOW WHICH ONE ARE WE TAKING--OR DID HE LEAVE IT FOR *US* TO DECIDE?
NO NO NO-- HE WAS VERY SPECIFIC.
HE SAID TO TAKE THE *LEFT* HAND...

THE ONE SOAKED IN *BLOOD*...

I HAVE A *FAX* FOR YOU MS. YAGI.

WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED...

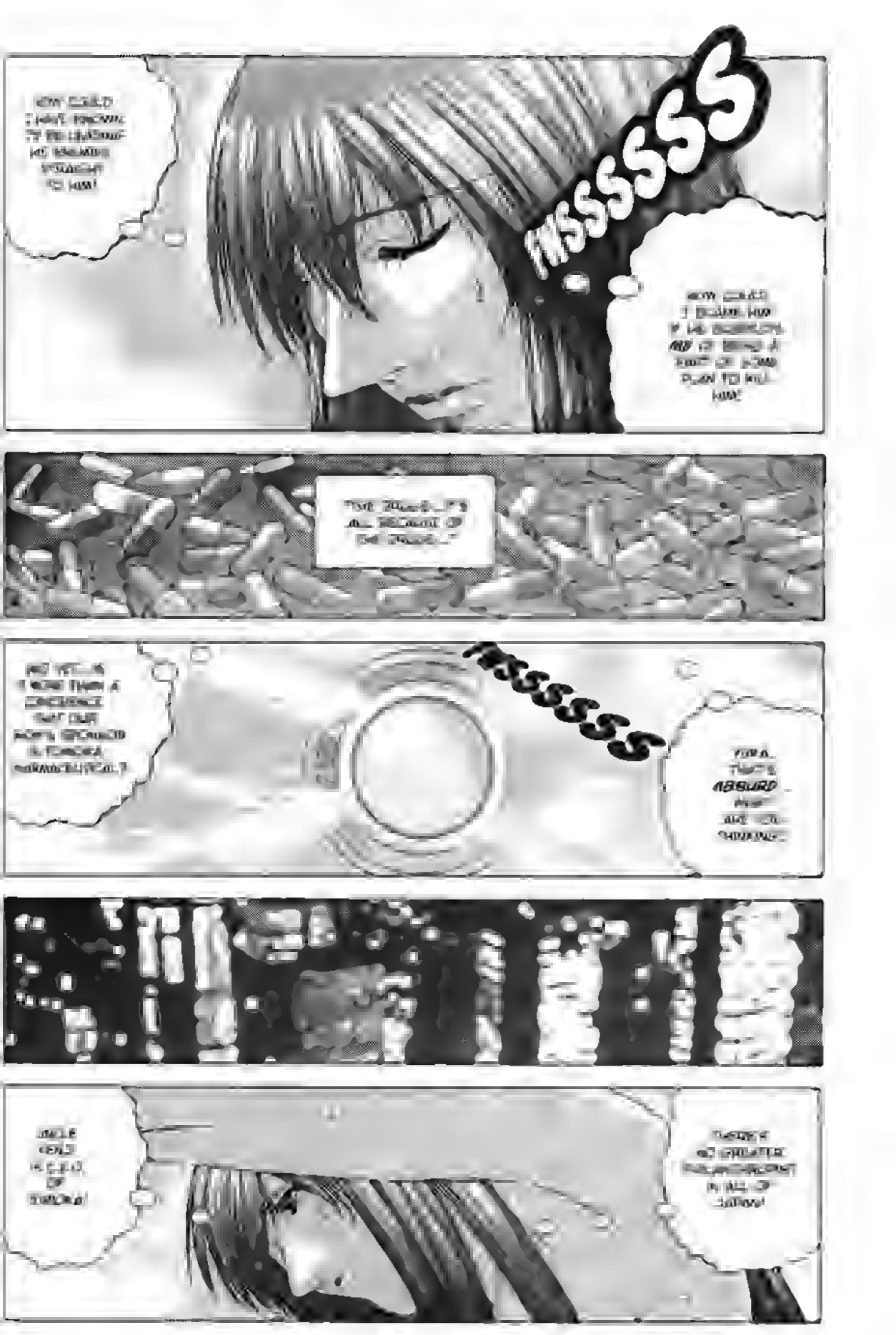
THANK YOU.

KLIK

SO THE NETWORK'S PULLED THE PLUG--NO SHOCK THERE--

...AND THEY'VE ALREADY BOOKED ME A FLIGHT HOME TOMORROW...

AHHHHHHH

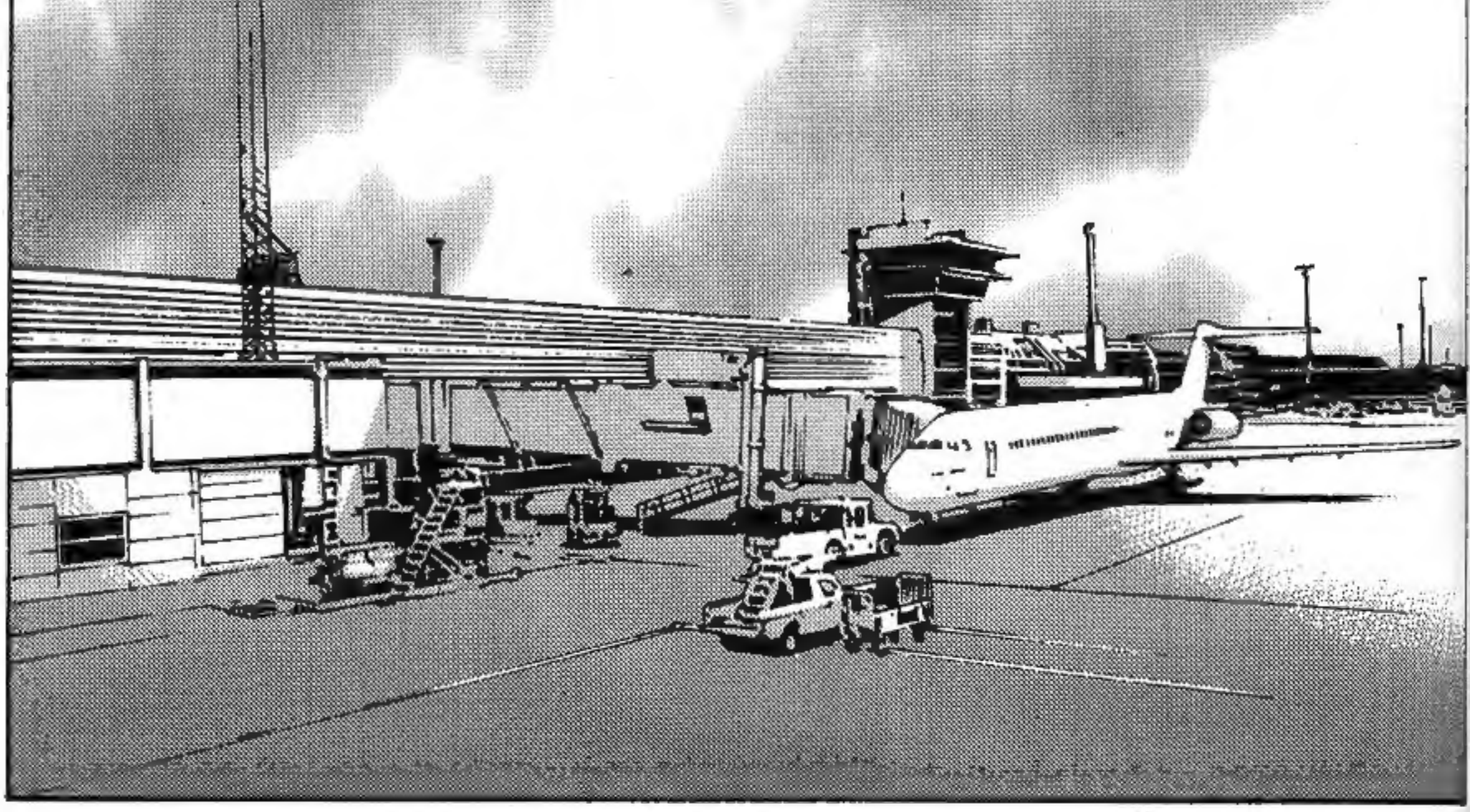

HSSSSSS
HSSSSSS

BEST THING ABOUT A SHOWER
..AND SO I GO BACK HOME A FAILURE. A DISGRACE..
..AND LEAVE BATMAN BEHIND . AND BRUCE
' ..THE TEARS DON'T SHOW '
THOUGHT WE WERE FINISHED FOR THE NIGHT
SORRY TO DIS-APPOINT
BUT I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW NAGAI'S DEAD
TOO BAD E.M.S COULDN'T SAVE HIM?

I IMAGINE THEY COULD HAVE
IF THEY'D HAD THE CHANCE TO TRY
SORRY, JIM. I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU--
WARBOD RETAIL PUMPED AN AMBULANCE OUT OF THE GARAGE AN HOUR AGO--
AND WE FOUND THE REAL T.M.S PERSONNEL BOUND AND GAGGED BEHIND A WAREHOUSE
A BLACK POST-MORTEM OPERATED WHICH DIED OF A DRUG OVERDOSE
BUT NOT OF A DRUG-- HE WAS PUMPED WITH A HUGE DOSE OF THIS
WE FOUND THIS HOLLOW SHAFT WITH THE STUFF IN THE AMBULANCE
MAGAR'S BODY WAS THE SMALL ONE INSIDE.

CORONER SAYS THERE'S NO GOOD REASON IT WOULD BE STANDARD ISSUE ON AN AMBULANCE --
--SO WE FIGURE THE E.M.S. FAKES MUST HAVE BROUGHT IT ALONG WITH THE INTENTION OF USING IT TO KILL.
APPARENTLY THE DRUG IS MANUFAC-TURED IN JAPAN--
--BY THE TOMIOKA PHARMA-CEUTICAL COMPANY...
HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW THAT?
AN EDUCATED GUESS, COMMIS-SIONER...
TOMIOKA PHARMACEUTICAL IS THE SPONSOR OF THE NEWS MAGAZINE SHOW NAGAI PRODUCED...
...THE ONE ANCHORED BY YUKO.
SURELY YOU DON'T SUSPECT THAT YOUNG WOMAN...
...MUCH LESS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED MEDICAL COMPANIES IN THE WORLD--
I'M NOT SURE WHAT OR WHO I SUSPECT... YET.

I DON'T LOOK LIKE I'M WORKING FOR ANY ANSWERS HERE IN GOTHAM
THE TRAIL IS CLEAR EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THIS CASE IS EITHER DEAD OR LEAVING TOWN...
SO WHAT'S MY NEXT MOVE? NOT MUCH OF A CHOICE
ALL ROADS LEAD TO JAPAN
BATMAN
ONE OTHER THING I MAY BE IMPORTANT...
YES?
RIGHT'S LEFT HAND WAS MISSING I WONDER WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CUT OFF
THE HAND THAT SCRATCHED MY FACE AND CARRIES MY BLOOD

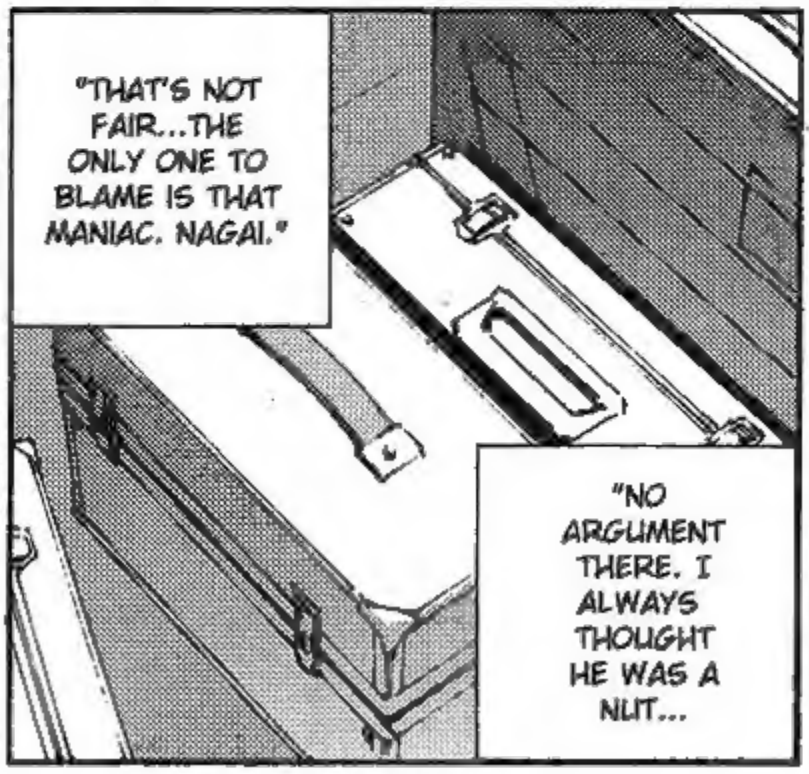


WELL, THAT WAS A HELL OF A TRIP...
OTHER THAN OUR PRODUCER TRYING TO KILL BATMAN...

...I THOUGHT IT WENT PRETTY WELL, ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT THIS GREAT FOOTAGE'LL BE SHELVED...
...AND THAT WE'LL BE LUCKY TO HANG ONTO OUR JOBS.

I NEED SOME FRESH AIR.

"I OUGHTA WATCH MY MOUTH... YUKO'S TAKING THIS HARD."
"WHAT D'YOU EXPECT? THIS WAS HER FIRST SOLO SHOT--AND SHE BLEW IT."


"THAT'S NOT FAIR...THE ONLY ONE TO BLAME IS THAT MANIAC. NAGAI."
"NO ARGUMENT THERE. I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS A NUT...

"...EVEN BEFORE HE WENT OFF THE DEEP END."

ZZEEEOOOOSH!!
AND I REALLY DIDN'T EVEN GET TO SAY GOODBYE...
...TO EITHER OF THEM.
YUKO! I THOUGHT I'D MISSED YOU...
...WHAT?
BRUCE!
I GUESS OUR DATE FOR TONIGHT IS OFF... RIGHT?
OH, BRUCE... I WAS TOO EMBARRASSED TO CALL. WE'VE BEEN ORDERED HOME BY THE NETWORK...
THE PRESS IS SAYING YOUR PRODUCER WAS KILLED IN AN ACCIDENT... I'M SORRY.
I SUSPECT THAT'S A COVER-UP, BRUCE...BUT I CAN'T EXACTLY LOOK INTO IT...
I SUSPECTED AS MUCH, MYSELF...
...AND YOU CAN FILL ME IN ON YOUR OWN THEORY, NEXT WEEK.

NEXT WEEK?! ARE YOU COMING TO JAPAN?!

I HAVE BUSINESS THERE--I HOPE YOU CAN MAKE TIME TO SEE ME!

"...OF COURSE, BRUCE... OF COURSE!"

"THEN IT'S A DATE, YUKO. I'LL SEE YOU IN TOKYO..."